



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General

16 December 2015

Original: English

Economic Commission for Africa
Committee on Gender and Social Development
First session
Addis Ababa, 17 and 18 December 2015
Item 12 of the provisional agenda*

Social Development Policy Division

Thematic paper

Sustainable Development Goals in Africa: opening inroads for enhancing gender and social development policies

I. Background

1. The present document provides an overview of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063, in terms of gender and social development, so that the Committee on Gender and Social Development can consider their implications for national development planning and related strategies and policies. More specifically, it is intended to guide the Committee's review of policies and programmes on employment, social protection, population, young people, gender equality and urbanization, given that related monitoring and implementation responsibilities lie primarily with member States.
2. African leaders have defined the region's long-term strategic vision and priorities for inclusive growth and transformation in Agenda 2063. At its core is a commitment to eradicating poverty through the social and economic transformation of the continent, while tackling environmental sustainability imperatives. The intention is to create decent jobs, economic opportunities and higher living standards for all citizens.
3. Similarly, the 2030 Agenda aims to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions globally, so that all persons can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives in peaceful, just and inclusive societies and in an environment that is protected from degradation. The Common Africa Position on the Post-2015 Development

* E/ECA/CGSD/1/1.

Agenda has played a key role in reflecting the region's common challenges, priorities and aspirations in the 2030 Agenda.

4. Both agendas play a critical part in mobilizing consensus, commitment and action among African member States to overcome their development challenges towards prosperous and sustainable pathways. Convergences in the agendas on Africa's policy priorities offer entry points for coherent implementation at the national level.

5. Follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the regional and subregional levels are vital. Drawing on national level reviews, regional processes are expected to contribute to follow-up and review processes of the 2030 Agenda at the global level. United Nations regional commissions are encouraged to continue supporting member States in this respect. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is well positioned to support its member States in mainstreaming the gender and social development dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national development planning.

II. Introduction

6. Through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), States committed themselves to making significant progress towards reducing the worst forms of human deprivation by 2015. Global progress has been registered in the achievement of these Goals but at a different pace across regions, especially in Africa, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. In 2015, the achievement of some MDGs has lagged behind, especially with regard to maternal, newborn and child health and to reproductive health.

7. In response, the 2030 Agenda seeks to address the unfinished business of the MDGs while defining a vision towards ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet. To that end, the 2030 Agenda sets out an inclusive and comprehensive sustainable development path that integrates economic, social and environment pillars.

8. The 2030 Agenda clearly articulates the gender and social dimensions of sustainable development by emphasizing the importance of inclusive and equitable economic growth, gender equality, empowering vulnerable groups (young people, older persons and migrants), ending malnutrition and enabling sustainable urbanization. It thus complements Agenda 2063 and its first 10-year action plan where priorities for gender equality and social development and related actions at the national, regional economic community and continental levels are articulated.

III. Gender and social development in the 2030 Agenda

9. The overarching commitments of member States in the 2030 Agenda are strongly geared towards advancing gender and social development priorities. Member States have underscored the need for inclusive economic growth, decent work for all, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, reduced inequalities, equitable and universal access to social protection and safe, resilient and sustainable human habitats. In the 2030 Agenda, these principles are further detailed in the form of specific standalone goals directly pertaining to gender and social development, which points to a high degree of political and policy concern and commitment among member States. In addition, a broader set of goals make reference to gender and social development as necessary elements of sustainable development.

A. Employment and social protection

10. The critical importance of employment has been underscored in Sustainable Development Goal 8 that sets a target of achieving at least 7 per cent annual economic growth (i.e. gross domestic product growth) for the 48 least developed countries, of which 34 are in Africa. Higher levels of productivity through diversification and value addition are also proposed. In terms of policies, access to productive employment and decent work feature prominently, together with equal pay for women and young people and access to financial services. Targets are also set for the protection of labour rights, including those of migrants, and the elimination of child labour. Young people also feature prominently, with a target to reduce the number not in employment, education or training. Other key issues covered under Goal 8 relate to decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation, forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, and promoting sustainable tourism, domestic financial institutions and Aid for Trade.

11. Equitable and universal access to social protection features as a key element of the overall vision of the 2030 Agenda. Member States have underlined the need for all people to enjoy a basic standard of living, including through social protection systems. Social protection features prominently in the Sustainable Development Goals in relation to ending poverty, achieving gender equality and tackling overall inequality. More specifically, target 1.3 under Goal 1 calls upon member States to implement social protection systems and measures for all, including floors to increase coverage for the poor and vulnerable. Target 5.4 under Goal 5 recognizes the need for social protection policies as a means of recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work. Furthermore, Goal 10 underlines the need to adopt social protection policies to achieve greater equality.

B. Population and young people

12. In the 2030 Agenda, the commitment of member States to factor population trends into their national, rural and urban development strategies and policies indicates the importance placed on those matters. Furthermore, target 5.6 under Goal 5 focuses on ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in line with existing global frameworks.

13. The needs of young people are clearly reflected in the 2030 Agenda. Recognizing their vulnerability, member States have committed themselves to empowering young people, including through enabling the realization of their rights and capabilities and tackling unemployment challenges. The importance of reaping the demographic dividend is also emphasized. A number of specific targets focus on various aspects of youth development. Target 4.4 seeks to increase the proportion of young people with relevant skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. Target 4.6 aims to ensure that all young people achieve literacy and numeracy. Target 8.6 focuses on the reduction of the proportion of young people who are not in employment, education or training. The objective of developing and operationalizing a global strategy for youth employment and implementing the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization is conveyed through target 8.b.

14. Migration is recognized as an important dimension of sustainable development in the 2030 Agenda, with member States committing themselves to cooperating to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons. Target 10.7 further underscores the need for planned and well-managed migration policies.

C. Urbanization

15. In view of the global urban transition (over half of the world's population is now urban) and the expected increase in this trend, the 2030 Agenda clearly articulates the urban dimension of sustainable development. Member States have recognized the centrality of sustainable urban development and management for quality of life and have committed themselves to addressing and minimizing related externalities, including those linked to community cohesion, personal security, employment, waste, energy and climate change.

16. Goal 11 is dedicated to ensuring the sustainability of cities and human settlements. Target 11.1 under this Goal aims to ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and slum upgrading. Other targets focus on enhancing access to additional urban services and infrastructure, including transport (especially public transport) and green and public spaces. Targets related to urban planning and governance are also included to promote participatory and integrated approaches for efficient and resilient urban development patterns. Particular attention is paid to the environmental aspects of urbanization including in relation to waste management, air quality, climate change, building materials and disasters. Importantly also, a target is set to enhance linkages between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.

D. Gender equality and women's empowerment

17. The importance of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through the adoption and strengthening of sound policies and enforceable legislation is captured in Goal 5. Such policies and legislation seek to address key priorities for gender equality and women's empowerment, including in relation to discrimination, violence against all women and girls, harmful practices, unpaid care and domestic work, participation in decision-making, opportunities for leadership, access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, rights to economic resources and technology.

18. The SDG framework, especially standalone Goal 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and the inclusion of gender perspectives and the recognition of issues facing women and girls in other goals, is an important opportunity for the promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in Africa. In addition to Goal 5, gender perspectives and special indicators for women have also been woven into other Goals, in particular those related to poverty alleviation, maternal health, educational attainment, water and sanitation and employment. This will encourage countries to look at sex and gender disaggregated data for all the issues tackled under the SDG framework.

IV. Implications of the 2030 Agenda for gender and social development policies and strategies: national and regional considerations

A. Harmonizing Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda

19. The domestication of the 2030 Agenda by African member States will have to be contextualized in the first 10-year action plan of Agenda 2063. With respect to gender and social development, there are clear parallels between Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

20. In terms of gender, Agenda 2063 prioritizes women's empowerment; the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls; equal social, political and economic rights; an end to all harmful social practices and barriers to health and education; and equal representation in public and managerial positions.

21. Addressing employment challenges in Africa is at the core of Agenda 2063, especially with respect to young people. Member States have committed themselves to putting in place macroeconomic policies that facilitate growth, employment creation, investments and industrialization.

22. Agenda 2063 places importance on youth empowerment by recognizing their potential as drivers of development, change and innovation. Targets are set to eliminate youth unemployment and guarantee access to a range of services and opportunities to enhance their social and economic status.

23. With respect to urbanization, Agenda 2063 sets a vision to ensure that cities and human settlements become centres of cultural and economic activities where modernized infrastructure and basic necessities (shelter, water, sanitation, energy, public transport and information and communication technology) are accessible.

B. Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda into national development planning

24. There is a renewed focus on national development planning as an essential vehicle for the achievement of Africa's vision and priorities for transformation. The impact of strategic, integrated and long-term national development plans and strategies is already being observed in some African countries, including Ethiopia, Morocco and Rwanda. National development planning is thus at the centre of Africa's efforts to bring about inclusive and sustainable growth and transformation.

25. To advance progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, related goals and strategies need to be mainstreamed into national development plans and strategies. Whilst sector-specific policies, plans and strategies remain essential, regional and global targets and goals need to be guided at the national level as part of defined national visions and strategies.

C. Implementation of policies, strategies and programmes towards the 2030 Agenda

26. While the level of political engagement and commitment in the formulation and adoption of the 2030 Agenda is significant, its achievement will depend primarily on whether member States design and implement the necessary strategies and programmes at the national and subnational levels. The 2030 Agenda places the primary responsibility of economic and social development on countries, while recognizing the important role of international transfer of technology and international public finance.

27. Guided by national development planning processes and sector specific policies, strategies and programmes on gender and social development will play a critical role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Existing policies and strategies need to be considered in the light of regional and global development goals. New policies and strategies should support progress towards the implementation of regional and global development goals and targets.

28. Drawing on lessons from the Millennium Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda prioritizes and defines means of implementation for the achievement of the goals and targets endorsed by member States. Goal 17 on strengthening the

means of implementation and revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development sets out finance, trade, capacity-building and systemic aspects.

D. Monitoring and reporting on progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda

29. The 2030 Agenda clearly states that the primary responsibility for the follow-up and review of its goals lies at the national, regional and global levels. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda must be accompanied with consistent, accurate and regular monitoring and reporting on progress towards achieving set goals and targets. A global indicator framework for monitoring progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is currently being developed.

30. In this context, Africa has been actively contributing to the formulation of the global indicator framework for the 2030 Agenda under the aegis of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, tasked with developing a proposal for the indicator framework for the monitoring of the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda at the global level under the leadership of national statistical offices.

31. A related aspect of Goal 17 is the emphasis on capacity-building for least developed countries to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data to support evidence-based policies, implementation and monitoring.

V. ECA support to member States on gender and social development towards the 2030 Agenda

32. Based on its ongoing work to support African member States in their transformation in line with Agenda 2063, ECA is well placed to assist with implementing and monitoring the 2030 Agenda in Africa. In particular, ECA will support member States in harmonizing the 2030 Agenda with Agenda 2063 in the context of national development planning. In this regard, ECA is already technically backstopping the African Union in the harmonization process.

33. Drawing on its vast expertise and knowledge, ECA will generate the evidence base for the formulation, revision and strengthening of gender and social development policies, strategies and programmes. Technical advisory services will also be provided to support the formulation, implementation and monitoring of specific gender and social development policies, programmes and strategies. This includes capacity-building support to strengthen member States policy responses on specific gender and social development priorities. In this respect, strengthening data and statistics for monitoring progress will constitute a key area of support provided by ECA to member States.

34. Examples of ECA knowledge, tools and expertise relevant to supporting member States on the gender and social development aspects of the 2030 Agenda include the following:

(a) *The gender and macroeconomics programme of the African Centre for Gender* assists African countries in formulating policies that take into account the different roles, needs and priorities of men and women, and in developing the capacity of national statistical offices on the concepts, tools and methodologies for collecting sex and gender disaggregated data;

(b) *The African Gender and Development Index* and other tools support effective planning, implementation and tracking of plans and policies by member States;

(c) *The toolkit for ageing surveys* provides data collection methodology and tools to support the formulation of evidence-based policies to address population ageing in Africa;

(d) *The African Social Development Index* supports member States in assessing and monitoring the extent of exclusion within their countries and in devising more inclusive and equitable social policies by working with national implementation teams;

(e) *The Cost of Hunger in Africa Methodology* strengthens capacities for estimating the costs arising from inaction on reducing hunger and malnutrition;

(f) *The urban indicators guideline* supports member States in the compilation and analysis of relevant urban data and statistics for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of urbanization policies and strategies;

(g) *The methodology on African cities development performance* measures the contribution of urbanization and urban areas to national development in support of growth and transformation;

(h) *Guidelines for mainstreaming urbanization into national development planning* to support member States in integrating and harnessing urbanization as a cross-sectoral driver of growth and transformation.

VI. Way forward: follow-up and review

35. In adopting the 2030 Agenda, member States have committed themselves to ensuring systematic follow-up and review of its implementation over the next 15 years at the global, regional and national levels. Importantly, follow and review efforts are to be country led, evidence driven and should build on existing platforms and processes. African member States need to take into account and plan for gender and social development as per the following follow-up and review mechanisms agreed under the 2030 Agenda:

(a) At the national level, member States are requested to develop practical and ambitious national responses for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and conduct regular and inclusive progress reviews at the national and subnational levels;

(b) At the regional level, peer learning (e.g. voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices, dialogue) is encouraged, building on existing follow-up and review mechanisms while recognizing the relevance of support from regional and subregional commissions and organizations in this respect;

(c) At the global level, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which is the United Nations main platform on sustainable development, will play a key role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, including through a global SDG progress report based on the global indicator framework and data from national statistical entities and regional level information. The Forum will meet every four years under the United Nations General Assembly to review progress towards the 2030 Agenda, with the first such meeting planned for 2019.