

Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)

ECA's contribution to the Report of the Secretary-General

Progress made in implementing the inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for eradicating poverty in accordance with the mandate

A. Capacity-building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda

Key activities, assessment of results and impact

ECA has been at the forefront in developing indicators for measuring and reporting on both 2030 agenda and Africa 2063 and developed the integrated planning and reporting toolkit, which is designed to facilitate the integration of multiple development frameworks into national development plans and to track progress in their implementation (ECA 2019).

ECA's engagement with member states extends to monitoring all goals and in particular the multidimensional nature of poverty and proposed development agendas into national plans, identifying reasons for partial or non-integration and track progress on the implementation of the national development plans.

ECA supported a shift in culture around the importance and ownership of government data and emphasis of Open Government Data projects from inputs and outcomes to impacts.

Open datasets can be used to assess, interrogate and validate progress towards the SDG objectives as measured through the various indicators. This is the case especially for the majority of indicators where direct micro-data is unavailable or unreliable and innovative proxies have to be found. Examples include Ethiopia **CommonSense** that provides farmers with weather forecasts and satellite-based information to help them make better planting decisions and improve their livelihoods and reduce poverty. It also provides access to insurance, and in Namibia helps track malaria factors and vectors using satellite and mobile phone data (Open Data Watch, n.d.).

Gaps and challenges

- Overall, 64% of indicators under SDG1 have no or insufficient data to measure progress on poverty eradication.
- Statistical capacity in African countries remains weak, and African experts struggle to mainstream methodologies proposed to them and adapt them in their countries realities.
- Funding for surveys depends heavily on donors; therefore, this has reduced the quality of the survey work, the ownership of the survey program and methodologies and, more seriously, the consistency and comparability of the surveys.
- Donors often come with their own priorities for survey design, their own objectives (which change over the years and reflect changes in questionnaires), and schedules, and sometimes even undermine statistical capacity by diverting scarce national human resources to work on their survey program.
- Various methodologies are used leading to non-comparability of surveys along time in particular when it comes the choice of expenditure or income for measuring poverty.

- Recent researches explore the use of tax or assets or satellite imageries or big data such as using mobile phone records, tweets, blogs, etc. These new developments are so far difficult to apply for African countries

B. Structural transformation, productive employment and decent work in the context of a changing world

Key activities, assessment of results and impact

ECA has assisted member states in resource mobilization to meet development needs and value-addition to increase employment creation. Employment is central in providing dignified incomes to the masses and contributing to important pathways for breaking away from poverty.

Since 2000 Africa's employment has grown at a rate of between 2.5 percent and 3 percent, less than that of real output growth. Employment growth is projected at 2.9 percent by the end of 2019 while real output growth is projected at 3.9 percent. Job-growth has always trailed economic growth in Africa (ILO 2019). In 16 developing countries with significant reductions in poverty during the past decade, the combined effect of growth in employment and labour incomes accounted for more than 50 per cent of the poverty reduction.

ECA developed and executed a comprehensive activity methodology to collect data on informal cross border trade along the Abidjan-Lagos Corridor in West Africa. The project identified numerous challenges impeding cross-border trade and proffered policy recommendations for their redress. The project will have an impact on poverty reduction as it makes proposals that will positively impact woman and youth as they make constitute the majority of cross border traders.

The dependency on commodities of African economies has not created jobs and informality represents approximately 80 percent of the labour force. The level and depth of informality remains a key development challenge.

In order to leverage the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as an instrument to fight poverty and spur economic growth, ECA supported five member States in preparing AfCFTA national implementation strategies. Many African countries have realised the potential of the AfCFTA, if supported by the right policies to lead to the structural transformation of their economies. The national strategies helped countries identify strategic sectors and products that they should focus on in the AfCFTA context. The sectors were chosen for their potential to create decent jobs including for youth and women.

ECA has advanced analytical research elucidating on the drivers of intra-African investment to understand what motivates such investment within the continent and further identify how the AfCFTA could be instrumental in increasing and deepening this type of investment. In this context, results have pointed towards education policy being a main driver for investment, and that in particular, gender sensitive and inclusive policies in the ECOWAS, SADC and CEN-SAD regional economic communities are determinants of greater intra-African investment.

As a key policy message the study advocates education policies that promote gender parity in secondary education and investment in girls' education to address the gender divide and attract greater investment. This contributes to UN efforts to support gender-sensitive policies for greater transformative structural changes in investment in Africa.

ECA has made an important contribution to the AfCFTA as a market for continental value-addition in manufactured goods (14 percent of total trade) and the creation of jobs. For example, ECA jointly with WHO and UNAIDS among others has leveraged the AfCFTA for pooled procurement of pharmaceuticals that is estimated to increase affordability and accessibility of medicines by 25 percent and tap into a continental market of 16 million jobs. This work has gained momentum in the current Covid-19 pandemic with the possibility of collective action on health supplies and policy responses.

Under technical support, ECA has supported the development of the African Union Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS) that was endorsed at the AU Summit in February 2020 as an AU Executive Council Decision.

Work is now underway to implement the Summit decision, and ECA is supporting the mapping exercise of initiatives and activities that will feed into the said implementation at national and regional levels, as part of greater collaboration with various stakeholders and UN agencies (e.g. ECA, ITU, UNCTAD). Understanding that the gains from productivity increases that may be expected from industrialization 4.0, and groups that typically are marginalized from labor markets, such as women and youth, are likely to benefit less from the anticipated opportunities and productivity gains, the DTS has mainstreamed gender and youth in all its pillars of work and areas of policy action, recognizing the gender and youth digital skills divide.

C. Expanding social protection to underpin inclusive poverty reduction development

12. Social protection systems are essential not only to lifting people out of poverty, but also in preventing them falling back. They are a potent tool for the reduction of vulnerabilities across the life cycle, narrowing inequalities and fostering inclusive growth. In Africa, several countries are shifting away from reactive appeals for emergency food aid to institutionalized productive safety nets that not only provide protection against drought shocks when required, but also livelihood support. It is a prominent component of national long-term development strategies and plans, and roughly one third of African countries now have social protection strategies. The pace of progress is slow and hampered by high levels of income inequality in countries. In addition, public spending on social protection remains low in Africa, on average approximately 2.8 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and less than half the world average of roughly 5.7 per cent (ECA 2020a).

ECA has contributed to strengthening integrated social protection systems along the life course to meet the needs of older persons and persons with disabilities and children through engagement with country teams including ILO and national policy makers to estimate resources required to reach 2030 Agenda given country specific population dynamics. This has also resulted in a policy toolkit in the design, implementation and scaling-up of social protection programmes. The policy uptake by national think tanks and other stakeholders by member states has been enhanced through capacitating activities on the financing of social protection systems. In the current health pandemic, the role of social protection as policy instruments that assist in improving resilience of the most vulnerable, the identification of the most vulnerable to better map impact are proposed.

References:

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- ECA (2019) Integrated Programme of Review
- ECA (2020) COVID-19 in Africa: Protecting Lives and Economies
- ECA (2020a) Consolidated report on social investments