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Reports to the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender – reporting and discussion: subprogramme 9 – poverty, inequality and social policy

Report on the activities of the Economic Commission for Africa relating to subprogramme 9: poverty, inequality and social policy

I. Introduction

1. The purpose of subprogramme 9 of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is to promote inclusive and equitable sustainable development, in line with internationally and regionally agreed commitments and frameworks, and to support the priorities of members of ECA. It is implemented by the Social Policy Section and the Urbanization and Development Section of the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division.
2. In the present report, an overview is provided of the work done under the subprogramme, during the biennium 2023–2025.
3. The work of ECA under the subprogramme contributes to the objectives of eradicating extreme poverty and reducing inequality by improving the policies and strategies of the members of ECA for social investment and urban job creation. The core mandate of the subprogramme is for ECA to undertake policy-oriented and empirical research to strengthen the capacity of its members to design and implement policies that promote inclusive and equitable sustainable development in the areas of poverty and inequality, employment, social protection, population, migration and urbanization, in a manner consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. Informed by the decisions and guidance of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender, ECA uses the subprogramme to respond to the social development priorities of Africa through analysis, policy advice, the development of tools, the convening of policy dialogues and capacity-building. Under the subprogramme, ECA collaborates with its members, the African Union Commission, entities of the United Nations system, civil society, regional economic communities and other development partners.

* E/ECA/CSPPG/6/1.



II. Main achievements during the biennium 2023–2025

A. Poverty eradication

4. At the Sixth African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum, held on the margins of the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in April 2024, a high-level policy dialogue on building capacity in science, technology and innovation to eradicate poverty and hunger in Africa was held under the subprogramme. Complementing this dialogue, the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), organized one of the parallel meetings held during the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. The purpose of the parallel meeting was to conduct an in-depth review of the progress made in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1 (no poverty).

5. Ahead of the tenth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, ECA coordinated the drafting of the background report on progress made in Africa in the achievement of Goal 1, with contributions from UNICEF, the International Labour Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The coordination work, which was conducted under the subprogramme, was designed to strengthen the capacity of members of ECA to measure poverty and inequality for informed policymaking. During the tenth session of the Forum, two high-level discussions were held under the subprogramme to present the central findings and recommendations set out in the report. The discussions were aimed at accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda across Africa.

6. Responding to demand from its members, ECA enhanced policymaking capacity in Ghana, Namibia, Somalia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania through training on the innovative imputed elasticity approach. The approach enables the estimation of poverty, inequality and vulnerability in the absence of recent household data, so as to better support robust, evidence-based policymaking. Over 80 policymakers from the five countries were trained in applying the approach to policy design and implementation. Also under the subprogramme in 2024, ECA used the imputed elasticity approach to generate updated estimates on poverty, vulnerability and inequality in Namibia without recent household data; the resultant findings directly informed the formulation of the Sixth National Development Plan of Namibia.

7. In 2025, under the subprogramme, ECA has supported its members in measuring and applying multidimensional poverty indices. It organized high-level side events at the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, held in New York in July, the general debate of the eightieth session of the General Assembly, held in New York in September, and the Second World Summit for Social Development, which will be held in Doha in November, all with a view to providing a venue for States to share their experiences of and best practices in reducing multidimensional poverty. Complementing those efforts, ECA has published policy briefs under the subprogramme, in which showcase important progress made by African States in reducing multidimensional poverty, while also highlighting areas that required further attention.

B. Social protection

8. In late 2023, a framework was developed under the subprogramme to help States to measure social protection performance and identify the segments of their populations that were in the greatest need. Also in 2023, ECA published a report¹ that included the scores of African countries, calculated using the multidimensional vulnerability to poverty index that the Commission had previously developed.

9. Under the subprogramme, ECA worked with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to launch a three-year project on national social protection policies and capacity to respond to the triple crisis in fuel, food and finance. The project, which was funded from the Development Account (sixteenth tranche), entailed holding capacity-building workshops for policymakers on multidimensional poverty and social protection in Namibia, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. The workshops, which had a strong focus on applying the multidimensional poverty index, helped policymakers to strengthen national social protection systems, by assisting them to identify vulnerable population groups, design policies to mitigate the effects of crises and expand adequate coverage to left-behind groups. In addition, as part of the project, ECA, ESCAP and the Department jointly organized an interregional workshop to enhance policymakers' responses to the triple crisis. Participants from countries across Africa and Asia – including Cambodia, Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia – learned new skills.

10. ECA, under the subprogramme, contributed to an initiative of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), funded from the Development Account (sixteenth tranche), on bridging the social protection gaps in the Arab and African regions. The initiative included a workshop in Ghana, which strengthened local policymakers' capacity to assess vulnerability and to effectively design and plan social protection policies and programmes for the most vulnerable population groups.

C. Migration

11. Under the subprogramme, in November 2024, ECA published a report,² in which it highlighted the importance of recognizing the links between climate change and migration, setting out a comprehensive assessment aimed at informing the design and implementation of sustainable, action-oriented policies across Africa.

12. ECA convened the second regional review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in Addis Ababa in October 2024. From the regional review, the recommendations of members of ECA were gathered, with a view to guiding participants in the second International Migration Review Forum, scheduled to be held in 2026. Participants in the regional review highlighted progress made in meeting the objectives of the Global Compact, including fostering regional cooperation and advancing data-driven migration policies. They also underscored the importance of a unified African position on

¹ ECA, *Strengthening Social Protection for Pandemic Responses: Identifying the Vulnerable, Aiding Recovery and Building Resilience* (Addis Ababa, 2023).

² ECA, "Africa migration report: climate change and migration in Africa" (Addis Ababa, 2024).

migration and of making migrants' human rights central to all policies and interventions.

13. In Harare in May 2025, ECA, the African Union Commission, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development organized a workshop on improving migration statistics and on good legal identity for migrants in East Africa, including the Horn of Africa. Participating representatives of African States validated two major outputs, under the joint programme of ECA and the African Union Commission: the consolidated regional report on migrants' legal identity³ and the good legal identity toolkit. Participants confirmed the relevance of both products and expressed strong interest in using them domestically. This demonstrated the need for ECA, in particular the African Centre for Statistics and the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division, to provide sustained technical assistance for adaptation and implementation, including through tailored support missions, training for representatives of East African States and follow-up consultations. The Centre and the Division are well-positioned to lead the roll-out of the toolkit, monitor its uptake and facilitate regional knowledge exchanges to inform future iterations and strengthen broader legal identity programming.

D. Young people

14. Under the subprogramme, a policy brief entitled "Youth employment in Africa: challenges and opportunities"⁴ was prepared. It includes an assessment of African prospects for creating jobs for young people; harnessing the demographic dividend; and building resilience to such shocks as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. It also features conceptual and empirical tools to guide the analysis of national youth employment policies.

15. ECA, under the subprogramme, worked with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to help four African States with reviewing the progress that they had made in harnessing the demographic dividend, in accordance with the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014, with a view to informing the development of youth policy. In addition, a briefing was given to ambassadors to articulate critical messages on the demographic dividend, aimed at shaping African contributions to the 2024 review process marking 30 years since the International Conference on Population and Development.

16. As part of the subprogramme, an expert group meeting was held under the theme "Jobs in Africa or jobs for Africans? Integrating skills migration in national youth employment strategies". The meeting was focused on creating jobs for young people; harnessing the demographic dividend; and building skills. At the meeting, which was held in Addis Ababa at the same time as the fifth session of the Committee on Social Policy, Poverty and Gender, on 31 October and 1 November 2023, findings were presented for feedback. Stakeholders from ministries, United Nations entities and academic institutions discussed opportunities to enhance the skills of African young people for improved labour-market outcomes.

³ ECA, *Towards Improving Migration Statistics and Good Legal Identity for Migrants in East Africa and the Horn of Africa* (forthcoming).

⁴ ECA (Addis Ababa, 2024).

E. Event marking 30 years of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

17. In May 2024, ECA and other regional commissions hosted an event on the margins of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Population and Development to share the outcomes of the regional reviews conducted in 2023 and reflect on progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and on gaps, challenges, priorities and opportunities. The African review had provided evidence-based perspectives on population and development.

F. Urbanization and evidence-based policymaking

18. ECA issued the report *State of Urbanization in Africa: Digital Transformation for Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Urbanization*,⁵ which had been validated at an expert group meeting in Addis Ababa in October 2024, during which regional experts and policymakers ensured alignment with the priorities of African States. The report comprised analysis of urban trends in Africa and practical strategies for harnessing digital transformation, anchored in the Sustainable Development Goals, to improve governance, resilience and economic productivity.

G. Expanded and resilient urban fiscal space for an inclusive and resilient COVID-19 recovery in Africa

19. Under the subprogramme, the ECA agenda on inclusive, resilient and productive African cities was advanced, with a focus on localizing the Sustainable Development Goals. A central element was a project on expanded and resilient urban fiscal space for an inclusive and resilient COVID-19 recovery in Africa, funded from the Development Account (fifteenth tranche) and implemented, jointly with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the United Nations Capital Development Fund, in Addis Ababa; Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania; Kigali; Lusaka; Nairobi; and Yaoundé.

20. The project serves as a collaborative platform for representatives of the six cities to exchange experiences on creating municipal fiscal space. Through high-level and technical meetings, the representatives benefited from peer-to-peer learning, knowledge-sharing and exposure to diverse approaches to managing urban finances. Sustainability and ownership were prioritized through common goals and a trust-building consultative approach. Meetings of technical working groups were organized, at which mayors and city officials received training on the collection, analysis and reporting of municipal finance data.

21. As part of the project, financial performance assessments were launched at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Seville, Spain, in June 2025. On the basis of the assessments, fiscal challenges and opportunities were identified and recommendations were made that informed city-level implementation plans. In accordance with those recommendations, Nairobi raised revenue targets, Lusaka tackled leakages with stricter advertising rules and digitalized payments, and Addis Ababa plans to

⁵ ECA (Addis Ababa, 2024).

use the report to pursue a credit rating. In addition, ECA, UN-Habitat and the United Nations Capital Development Fund worked with city governments to develop financial databases, with a view to supporting future fiscal planning and establishing stronger revenue systems for improved urban service delivery.

22. The chief outcome of the financial assessments is a compendium of municipal finance best practice from all six cities, with a view to the adoption of those practices in other African cities. Featured in a forthcoming ECA policy brief, the compendium contains strategies for improving revenue, expenditure and fiscal space.

H. Urban data

23. Since one priority under the subprogramme is to prioritize strengthening data systems to inform urban policy and planning, ECA has been helping the six above-mentioned city governments to collect and validate fiscal data. A fiscal space performance and monitoring dashboard has been developed and is ready for deployment in those cities.

24. Under the subprogramme, ECA peer reviewed *Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2025*, a major report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).⁶ On the margins of the inaugural Africa Urban Forum, held in Addis Ababa in September 2024, ECA and OECD co-hosted an event on local data. The event included the soft launch of the Africa Urbanization Portal, which is a centralized repository for urban data, policies, analysis and voluntary local review reports. The Portal is designed to help policymakers, development practitioners and researchers with navigating urban complexity and to facilitate peer-to-peer learning among African city governments.

I. Quality of Life initiative

25. The Quality of Life initiative, part of the urbanization work of ECA, goes beyond economic measures, embedding multidimensional well-being indicators into local planning. It supports the achievement and localization of the Sustainable Development Goals across Africa.

26. ECA and other regional commissions have supported this UN-Habitat initiative since 2023. ECA presented the results of its urban well-being survey at the twelfth session of the World Urban Forum, held in Cairo in November 2024, and hosted an event on the margins of the ninth session of the Statistical Commission for Africa, resulting in the incorporation of quality-of-life recommendations into the session's outcome document. ECA has increased the visibility of its work under the initiative through blog posts and media outreach across Africa.

27. During the first half of 2025, ECA raised awareness of how quality-of-life metrics support the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals among authorities, statistical offices and communities in Accra; Dire Dawa, Ethiopia; Harare; and Nairobi. Through these efforts, data gaps were identified and capacity was built for integrating quality-of-life metrics into urban strategies.

⁶ OECD (Paris, 2025).

J. Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

28. Under the subprogramme, the Social Policy Section contributed to the background report on decent work and economic growth, which was discussed at the eleventh session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, held in Kampala in April 2025.

29. In addition, the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division jointly organized a high-level panel under the theme “Capitalizing on the Second World Summit for Social Development to advance the achievement of African priorities (poverty eradication; full employment and decent work for all; inclusivity and social integration, leaving no one behind; and full achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063)”.

30. At the regional preparatory workshop for African voluntary national reviews and voluntary local reviews, held on the margins of the eleventh session of the Forum, the Urbanization and Development Section led the day dedicated to voluntary local reviews, which included training on planning for change with the Sustainable Development Goals, along with peer-to-peer learning among representatives of a number of States on financing, monitoring, evaluating and scaling up such reviews. Solutions highlighted during the discussions included citizen-led data collection; partnerships between local authorities in Africa and others throughout the global South; participatory planning and budgeting; and platforms for peer-to-peer learning. In the workshop’s outcome document (ECA/RFSD/2025/VNR/1), recommendations from participants included that local governments should use the *Africa Voluntary Local Review Guidelines*,⁷ issued by ECA and partners.

K. Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals and voluntary local reviews

31. In January 2025, ECA and the Addis Ababa city administration jointly held a workshop in Bishoftu, Ethiopia, and online, in a hybrid format, aimed at strengthening the capacity of the country’s national and local governments to align their development plans with the 2030 Agenda.

32. Also in 2025, ECA supported the finalization of the voluntary local reviews of Dire Dawa, Djibouti and Lusaka, while additionally working with UN-Habitat to support the launch of the voluntary local review of Banjul. In 2024 and early 2025, ECA continued to contribute to the UN-Habitat initiative aimed at fostering recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and implementation of the 2030 Agenda through local action.

33. ECA has been working with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to implement the latter’s initiative on strengthening local and national government capacity to localize the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa: the Commission takes the lead in implementing the initiative in Zambia, while also supporting related activities in Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and South Africa. Preparatory work has been done on a workshop, scheduled to be held in Zambia in February 2026, at which guidance will be provided on planning and budgeting for the Goals and on new voluntary local reviews.

⁷ UN-Habitat, United Cities and Local Governments and ECA (Nairobi; Barcelona, Spain; Addis Ababa, 2022).

L. Urban economic resilience for inclusive response and recovery from crises

34. Under the subprogramme, ECA has implemented a number of initiatives pertaining to advancing urban economic resilience for inclusive response and recovery from crises, funded from the Development Account (sixteenth tranche), such as the urban resilience project for Harare, launched after the twelfth session of the World Urban Forum. ECA also contributed to the “International guidelines on people-centred smart cities”⁸ and to *World Smart Cities Outlook 2024*.⁹ In addition, in Harare in August 2025, ECA organized an expert group meeting and training session for 34 stakeholders from Governments, academic institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organizations, aimed at building skills for digital, climate-responsive and inclusive city planning.

M. High-level political forum on sustainable development

35. ECA, under the subprogramme, participated in the 2025 annual meeting of the Partnership Platform on Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals, jointly organized by the Ministry of Environment and Energy Security of Italy and UN-Habitat, aimed at fostering dialogue on policy and governance tools to translate national commitments into local action. ECA was central to the design of the Platform methodology during the meeting and will play a crucial role in piloting it in Senegal and Tunisia. The results will be discussed at the twelfth session of the African Regional Forum for Sustainable Development.

N. World Urban Forum

36. At an event on the margins of the twelfth World Urban Forum, the Urbanization and Development Section presented the Africa Urbanization Portal, highlighting its role in advancing the localization, monitoring and attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

37. In addition, ECA, other regional commissions and UN-Habitat co-hosted an event on the margins of the Forum about urban quality of life, producing a joint position paper on interregional perspectives.

O. Africa Urban Forum

38. ECA, under the subprogramme, worked with the African Union Commission and UN-Habitat to organize the inaugural Africa Urban Forum. The Forum provided a continental platform to advance sustainable development in human settlements, enabling Governments to collaborate on strengthening African cities. Established by the States members of the African Union in 2022, the Forum is a response to rapid urbanization, addressing both opportunities and challenges, while promoting an inclusive, integrated approach to urbanization.

⁸ UN-Habitat (Nairobi, 2025).

⁹ UN-Habitat (Nairobi, 2024).

P. Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development

39. In May 2025, ECA hosted an African regional consultation in preparation for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, with over 20 policymakers, leaders and experts meeting online to shape the continent's chief messages. At the Conference, convened in July, ECA amplified African urban voices, emphasizing the role of cities in financing sustainable development. Participants in ECA panels and events held on the margins of the Conference highlighted African priorities – domestic resource mobilization, municipal finance and innovative instruments – and presented evidence from the Commission's projects funded from the fifteenth and sixteenth tranches of the Development Account.

III. Partnerships

A. United Nations system

40. The Urbanization and Development Section worked with a number of United Nations entities – including UN-Habitat, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, other regional commissions, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office for Project Services, resident coordinator offices and country teams – to advance initiatives to strengthen local governance and urban resilience. These included the expansion of city governments' fiscal space, support for the Quality of Life initiative, ongoing work to build urban economic resilience and the enhancement of local authorities' capacity to design and implement strategies for financial recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the Section worked with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on voluntary national and local reviews.

41. The Social Policy Section also worked with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, alongside ESCAP and ESCWA, to support African States by using tools developed by all partner organizations to assess and advance social protection systems and measure multidimensional poverty. In addition, in partnership with IOM, the Section supported the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, notably by contributing to the regional review.

B. African Union

42. Under the subprogramme, ECA has closely cooperated with the African Union Commission, in particular the Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, on migration-related work, including monitoring of the Global Compact for Migration, the Migration Policy Framework for Africa and a joint initiative on international migration. ECA also works with the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security. With the African Union Commission and UNFPA, ECA reviews the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa beyond 2014. With UN-Habitat and the African Union Commission, it strengthens reporting on progress made in Africa in implementing the New Urban Agenda. ECA also supports meetings of the African Union Commission specialized technical committees to advance regional priorities within the United Nations

development system. Also during the reporting period, insights from every level, local to continental, have provided credible evidence for African Union response programmes.

C. Local Governments for Sustainability

43. In 2024, ECA and Local Governments for Sustainability identified ways in which African urbanization and local governance were complementary, including in terms of knowledge generation, capacity-building and advisory services. Potential areas of collaboration include an expert meeting and a knowledge product on the informal economy, and a joint fundraising proposal targeting data analytics and informality.

D. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

44. ECA and OECD advanced an initiative to transform three transport and trade corridors – trans-Maghreb; Ouagadougou to Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire; and the Lobito Corridor – into drivers of local economic development and territorial cohesion.

E. World Resources Institute

45. In January 2024, ECA and the World Resources Institute explored collaboration on urban data and analytics and on informality. They identified overlaps in city-focused work and agreed to refine their joint priorities. Both organizations plan to formalize the intended partnerships through a memorandum of understanding.

F. Inter-State consultation mechanisms on migration in Africa and the Americas

46. Under the subprogramme, ECA was represented at a dialogue for inter-State consultation mechanisms on migration in Africa and the Americas, held in Banjul in July 2024. It was the first time that ECA had been represented at such an interregional dialogue. Inter-State consultation mechanisms on migration – which include regional, interregional and global migration forums – play a vital role in Africa, by fostering intraregional dialogue and cooperation and building strong foundations for international cooperation on migration governance and policy.

G. Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative

47. ECA has, under the subprogramme, a long-standing partnership with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, an economic research centre within the University of Oxford, on helping African States to measure multidimensional poverty and apply multidimensional poverty indices to social protection policies. In 2025, ECA and the Initiative concluded a memorandum of understanding on increasing assistance with the use of such indices and on the joint hosting of advocacy events and capacity-building workshops in African countries.

IV. Challenges and lessons learned

A. Challenges

48. The activities under the subprogramme are often fragmented across multiple workstreams, reflecting the diverse needs of African States, but overstressing limited resources and reducing impact. Clearer prioritization would help to ensure focus on high-value areas and attain more coherent results.

49. Persistent data gaps constrain progress and reduce capacity to monitor and design robust policies. Challenges are further aggravated by climate change, disaster risks, the persistent economic after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the broader uncertainty that African States are facing.

50. Uptake of policy recommendations is uneven, as many knowledge products are not integrated into national processes. Weak institutional capacity and changing agendas hinder implementation.

51. Funding cuts constrain the scope and timeliness of support under the subprogramme, the financing of which has been reduced, risking scaled-back activities and weakening sustained engagement with African States. The cuts have been occurring amid heightened uncertainty, overlapping crises, fiscal pressures and changing priorities, making predictable support even more critical.

B. Lessons learned

52. Knowledge production and policy support will, at the planning stage, be anchored in formal agreements with universities and think tanks. Resource limitations constrain the ability of ECA to respond to requests from its members for technical assistance, making prioritization essential. Shifting national priorities and institutional turnover further disrupt continuity. Securing predictable, sustainable financing is critical for maintaining capacity support and translating ECA evidence into specific policy reforms. For effective coordination among United Nations entities, regional organizations, ministries and research institutions, it is necessary to increase synergy, avoid duplication and prevent delays in addressing the needs of African States.

V. Activities planned for 2026 and 2027

A. Productive youth employment and entrepreneurship

53. Building on the commitments made in the Pact for the Future, at the Second World Social Summit for Development and in the report on the activities under subprogramme 9 during the biennium 2022–2023 (E/ECA/CSPPG/5/10), the Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division will intensify its work on overcoming barriers to productive youth employment and entrepreneurship. Given the demographic trends in Africa, this largest segment of the population needs to be prioritized in order for Africa to harness the demographic dividend and reach its full potential. Beyond analytical work, the Division will make use of the convening function of ECA, forging partnerships with Governments, private companies and the African Development Bank to organize capacity-building workshops to equip young people with skills and knowledge, including in respect of the opportunities offered by the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

B. Social protection

54. ECA will work with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and ESCAP on a project to strengthen social protection policies and crisis response capacity in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Focused on the fuel, food and finance crisis, the initiative will help Cambodia, Maldives, Namibia, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia to develop integrated social protection strategies. The project is also aimed at strengthening institutional capacity for designing and implementing universal social protection policies, prioritizing the policies most affected by overlapping crises.

55. Under the subprogramme, ECA will work with the Government of Ghana to prepare a vulnerability assessment report and country profile, incorporating estimated risks of falling into multidimensional or monetary poverty. Building on this work, the Commission will support the Government in undertaking an in-depth assessment of the country's social protection programmes and policies, which will inform a comprehensive social protection report and country profile, both produced by ECA and aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of social protection systems and programmes in Ghana.

C. Poverty and inequality reduction

56. Acknowledging the multidimensional nature of poverty, ECA is committed to reducing all forms of it and will, under the subprogramme, help African States to design country-specific multidimensional poverty indices and develop policies informed by localized data. Such indices will enable targeted, sector-specific interventions to accelerate poverty reduction by prioritizing the poorest, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 1 and the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063.

57. ECA will use multidimensional poverty indices disaggregated by gender, age, region and ethnicity to promote inclusive, evidence-based policymaking. In partnership with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, ECA will provide analytical and capacity-building support. Furthermore, it will develop a holistic, user-friendly online interface with national statistical offices

to integrate data from such indices with other social and fiscal indicators, including budgetary allocations, enabling Governments to visualize poverty dynamics and guide strategies coordinated among ministries to comprehensively address poverty and inequality.

D. Migration

58. Under the subprogramme, ECA will support the co-chairs of the champion countries of the Global Compact for Migration, in preparation for the second International Migration Review Forum, scheduled to be held in the second quarter of 2026.

59. ECA will also strengthen its partnership with the African Union Commission on the project known as “International migration in Africa: shaping a positive narrative and removing barriers to mobility”. Phase 2 of the project is planned to start in January 2026, with a three-year duration.

E. State of urbanization report, 2025

60. The 2025 edition of the ECA report on the state of urbanization in Africa will be published in early 2026. The report will be formed from the combination of four shorter forthcoming reports, all of which will broadly address inclusive growth, social development and sustainable urbanization. It will include an assessment of how rapid urbanization can drive inclusive, resilient development; an analysis of job-rich urbanization, productive cities, connected spatial systems and stronger local finance; and comparative case studies, data and cluster analyses, which will serve to highlight both opportunities and structural challenges.

61. It will also include an examination of urban social protection systems, with a view to addressing poverty and informality. In addition, it will feature an exploration of the role of urbanization in sustainable social development and emphasis on adaptive governance for resilience. The central message will be that, even though African cities can accelerate transformation and improve quality of life, successful urbanization requires deliberate policies, stronger institutions and coordinated investment, in which economic, social and environmental priorities are aligned.

F. Knowledge product on domestic resource mobilization at the subnational level

62. An analytical report on the role of African cities in domestic resource mobilization will be released in early 2026, following the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development. It will include an exploration of how urbanization can boost revenue through improved tax administration, property taxation, land value capture and municipal borrowing, including green and diaspora bonds. Featuring an assessment of the institutional and regulatory conditions for fiscal space, the report also includes the argument that cities are central to the domestic resource mobilization that is needed to foster resilient, self-financed development in Africa.

63. The Urbanization and Development Section is engaged in preparatory work for the launch, during the second quarter of 2026, of a research agenda on the links between urbanization and social policy, the purpose of which will be

to inform policy by drawing on empirical research and analysis based on data from platforms that support African city governments and mayors. Accordingly, the Section will forge partnerships with other United Nations entities and stakeholders to disseminate regional and global best practices and tools to address urbanization and development challenges.

G. Expanded and resilient urban fiscal space for an inclusive and resilient COVID-19 recovery in Africa

64. Training on action plans to expand local fiscal space in Africa will strengthen the capacity of local officials, planners and finance professionals to design, implement and monitor such action plans. In 2026, ECA, UN-Habitat and the United Nations Capital Development Fund, its partners in the project on expanded and resilient urban fiscal space for an inclusive and resilient COVID-19 recovery in Africa, funded from the Development Account (fifteenth tranche), will develop the materials, while the training itself will be provided by the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning.

H. Urban economic resilience for inclusive response and recovery from crises

65. Under the subprogramme, ECA will host interregional knowledge-sharing events on financing, study tours linking local governments with financial institutions and expert meetings to support project preparation and the pairing of investors with projects. Complementary measures include workshops on gaining access to funding opportunities, updates to a related e-learning platform for wider reach and a train-the-trainers workshop to build local capacity and disseminate knowledge.

I. Participation in regional and global forums

66. The Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division will participate in the twelfth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held in the first half of 2026, by co-hosting a preparatory workshop on voluntary national reviews and voluntary local reviews. The Division will also take part in the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum, which will be convened in Baku in May 2026, to advance the work of ECA on inclusive, resilient and digital urbanization. In addition, the Urbanization and Development Section will participate in the high-level political forum, which will be held in New York in July 2026.
