

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General
22 October 2015

Original: English

Economic Commission for Africa
Committee on Gender and Social Development
First Session
Addis Ababa, 17 and 18 December 2015

Report on the Application of the African Social Development Index in select African countries**I. Introduction****A. Background**

1. The fast and sustained economic growth in Africa over the past two decades has not yet translated into improved social outcomes in most countries. High levels of poverty and inequality persist, caused by differences in income, gender, ethnicity and age.
2. This is largely because the nature of growth is mainly capital-intensive, with limited job creation, and unfair redistribution of economic gains. That is, growth is not sufficiently inclusive and equitable, skewing development dynamics and excluding large segments of the population from development processes.
3. The excluded groups have limited access to social protection and economic opportunities, and are vulnerable to external shocks, which reduces their productive capacities and pushes them back or further into poverty. This in turn deters overall growth and development, and threatens the prospects of peace and stability.
4. Promoting more inclusive development in Africa is therefore an urgent priority and a pre-condition for building more sustainable and cohesive societies, and in the long term, towards Africa achieving the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

B. African Social Development Index

5. African member States requested ECA, during the second session of the Committee on Human and Social Development 2011, in Addis Ababa, to develop an African-specific indicator for tracking progress on reducing human exclusion.
6. The African Social Development Index was developed in response to this request. It follows a life-cycle approach building on the premise that people can face different forms of exclusion at different stages of life, which are likely to

have cumulative and adverse effects over their lifetimes. The focus is on the effects of policy interventions and contextual factors (social, economic, political and cultural) on human exclusion at different points in time.

7. Based on this framework, the African Social Development Index aims to estimate the levels of human exclusion in six key dimensions of well-being (see table 1). Its disaggregation by gender and location (subgroup analysis), provinces (subnational analysis), and over time (longitudinal analysis), allows the Index to track exclusion within countries and over time.

Table 1

Exclusion through the life cycle

<i>Life-phase</i>	<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Impact indicator</i>
Birth (0-27 days)	Survival	Infant Mortality
Early childhood (0-5 years)	Health and Nutrition	Under-nutrition and stunting
Formative years (6-14 years)	Quality education	Youth literacy rate
Entering the labour market (15+)	Productive employment	Youth unemployment
Productive life (25+)	Means of subsistence	Poverty rate (national)
Old age (60+)	Living a decent life	Life expectancy at 60

C. Selection of indicators

8. Indicators were selected in consultation with key experts from member States, regional institutions and development partners, and are based on three main criteria:

- (a) Relevance of dimensions or indicators in the African context;
- (b) Readily available data, including possibly at the subnational level;
- (c) Use of “impact” rather than “output” indicators.

9. While the selected indicators may not capture the full dimension of exclusion in each phase of life, they were chosen as the best proxy indicators based on available data and empirical evidence on exclusion in Africa.

D. Key features of the African Social Development Index

10. The Index has a number of key features that distinguishes it from other indices:

- (a) It was developed on the basis of a request from member States;
- (b) It uses national data, and so does not rank countries;
- (c) It is intuitive and simple to comprehend and compute;
- (d) It is the only indicator to measure human exclusion;
- (e) It follows a life-cycle approach;
- (f) It is anchored on Africa’s development priorities.

II. Progress on the application of the African Social Development Index in Africa

11. During the biennium 2014-2015, a series of activities were accomplished in order to roll out and apply the African Social Development Index in member States. These include:

(a) As part of the preparatory process, several meetings were organized with relevant stakeholders to review and validate the conceptual and methodological frameworks of the African Social Development Index with senior experts from member States, regional economic communities, agencies of the United Nations system, and regional research institutions. Based on their feedback, the model was revised and completed in March 2014.

(b) In June 2014, the first capacity-building workshop was organized for five pilot countries – Cameroon, Kenya, Morocco, Senegal and Zambia. Participants included two representatives of key ministries, including the Ministry of Development Planning, and national statistics offices. The purpose of the meeting was to test the African Social Development Index in select African countries, and to build capacities in these countries for using the Index as a tool for social policy analysis and planning. The training included hands-on sessions, where participants computed the Index over time, at national and subnational levels, and for different population groups, using national data. Results were presented by the respective country teams, and were instrumental in identifying the key drivers and groups most affected by exclusion. Policy analysis was undertaken by the national teams using these preliminary results.

(c) Throughout the biennium, the African Social Development Index was presented at a number of high-level policy forums and meetings. These included the official launch of the Index at the ninth African Development Forum in Marrakech, Morocco in October 2014; and its endorsement at the (2015) Conference of Ministers in Addis Ababa in March 2015. During the Conference, the African Ministers of Finance and Economic Development endorsed a resolution encouraging member States to adopt the African Social Development Index as a key policy tool for the implementation and monitoring of Agenda 2063 and the post-2015 development agenda.

(d) A side event was also organized during the (2015) Conference of Ministers – in the form of a roundtable discussion on the use of the African Social Development Index and other policy tools for development planning, which was attended by key policy experts from the region.

(e) Since November 2014, the African Social Development Index has been applied in different countries. Five subregional workshops have been organized to build national capacities in using the Index for social policy analysis and planning. The trainings covered a total of 46 member States and 8 regional economic communities, including senior officials from Ministries of Development Planning, Ministries of Economy and Finance, Ministries in charge of Social Affairs, and national statistics offices.

III. Key achievements of the African Social Development Index

12. There have been a number of achievements:

- The **subregional trainings** on the African Social Development Index were highly attended, and elicited a number of requests from member States and regional economic communities to support them in the use of the Index in development planning processes. The Division is assisting the Western African Economic Monetary Union (WAEMU) in building the capacity of senior statisticians for mainstreaming the Index at the subregional level. Additional requests for technical support have been received from the Governments of Angola, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Mauritius and Rwanda.
- The roll-out of the Index in 46 African countries has allowed for

testing and further refining of the tool, making it more responsive to the needs of member States. More importantly, the trainings for developing and applying the Index have contributed to strengthening national capacities in identifying policies and programmes that contribute to reducing exclusion over time and across population groups.

- Establishing national implementation teams in each country has been instrumental in ensuring the ownership and political buy-in of Governments and regional economic communities. The teams include representatives from key social ministries and national statistics offices who are presently leading the process of data collection and the production and analysis of results, with support from ECA.
- Preliminary results produced by the country teams during the capacity-building trainings have been consolidated in five African Social Development Index Subregional Reports. The first was launched in Southern Africa in October 2015, while the other four will be finalized and launched in the first semester of 2016 in West, East, Central and North Africa.
- The African Social Development Index country results are a key component of the ECA Country Profiles presently under preparation.
- The Division has established a number of strategic partnerships with research institutions and funding partners – including the Society for International Development and the Rockefeller Foundation – to mobilize resources and scale up the impact and sustainability of the Index in Africa.

IV. Looking ahead

13. Initial results of the African Social Development Index for Southern Africa have confirmed that, notwithstanding the high levels of economic growth, countries are still coping with the challenge of making this growth more inclusive and equitable. The subnational disaggregation and analysis of drivers of exclusion in particular, have highlighted important gaps between locations and population groups, which can guide Governments in designing more targeted and inclusive social policies.

14. In this context, a policy-mapping framework has been developed by the Social Development Policy Division to identify and assess the effectiveness of social policies in reducing human exclusion over time. The framework has been piloted in Benin, and will soon be disseminated and shared with member States and other stakeholders. This exercise is a major step forward in using the African Social Development Index for improved policy targeting and development planning.

15. The outcomes of the African Social Development Index are also contributing to related activities and analytical work of the Division in the areas of nutrition, social protection and employment – including the Cost of Hunger Studies, the African Social Development Report on ‘Informality and Inequality in Africa’, and the Report on Urbanization in Africa, among others.

16. Global and regional frameworks, such as Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, offer an important window of opportunity to move beyond economic growth and place human and social dimensions at the centre of the development process.

V. Challenges and conclusion

17. Preliminary results of the African Social Development Index have pointed to the need for African countries to refocus their development priorities to tackle human exclusion more effectively, and deal with the structural drivers. Exclusion is a multidimensional phenomenon, and confronting it is a long-term process, particularly when its causes are rooted in historical and cultural norms. Policies that expand opportunities and human capital can ensure the effective integration of all individuals in the development process.

18. Achieving inclusive development is not simply about increasing the size of national economies, but also about expanding opportunities that take the rights of individuals and the issue of equity into consideration. The African Social Development Index provides an important tool for member States to identify policy gaps and formulate appropriate policy interventions to reduce human exclusion over time.

19. However, the application of the Index in select African countries has also highlighted a number of important challenges, including the limited availability of disaggregated data, particularly at the subnational level, that can hamper the effective use of the Index for policy planning. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that political buy-in does not always translate into sustained national commitment. It will therefore be critical to provide continued support to countries in improving data collection and closely monitoring the implementation of the African Social Development Index, to ensure that the Index is effectively mainstreamed in national and subnational development processes.

Annex 1

List of African Social Development Index dissemination events

- ASDI Dissemination Workshop and Training to WAEMU, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (October 2015)
- Pan-African Parliament (PAP) Committee on Education Annual Meeting, Johannesburg, South Africa (October 2015)
- International Expert Workshop on Social Indices, Lusaka, Zambia (June 2015)
- ASDI Subregional Training for Central Africa, Douala, Cameroon (June 2015)
- ASDI Subregional Training for North Africa, Cairo, Egypt (June 2015)
- ASDI Subregional Training for East Africa, Kigali, Rwanda (June 2015)
- ASDI Subregional Training for West Africa, Cotonou, Benin (May 2015)
- First Africa Prosperity Summit, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (May 2015)
- Specialized Technical Committee (STC) of the African Union Commission and Economic Commission for Africa Joint Annual Conference of Ministers of Social Development and Labour, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (April 2015)
- Eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (March 2015)
- Africa Forum on Inclusive Economies, Nairobi, Kenya (December 2014)
- First African Conference on Social Protection, Nairobi, Kenya (November 2014)
- ASDI Subregional Training for Southern Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa (November 2014)
- Ninth African Development Forum, Marrakesh, Morocco (October 2014)
- National Launch of the African Social Development Index and the Economic Report on Africa 2014, Yaoundé, Cameroon (July 2014)
- United Nations Development Programme and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Expert Group Meeting on Economic Inequality, Johannesburg, South Africa (April 2014)
- Intergovernmental Committee of Expert (ICE) for Southern Africa, Lusaka, Zambia (March 2014)
- Intergovernmental Committee of Expert (ICE) for Central Africa, Brazzaville, Congo (March 2014)
- Presentation to the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso February 2014