



**PROSPECTS FOR AFRICA –
EUROPE'S POLICIES**

The VENRO Project on the
Africa-EU Partnership

Putting Rural Development First! The Africa-EU Partnership on Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure

2010



Recommendations of the Meeting of African and European Civil
Society Organisations in Bonn, November 2009

VENRO
ASSOCIATION OF GERMAN
DEVELOPMENT NGOs

European NGO confederation
for relief and development
CONCORD
Confédération européenne des ONG
d'urgence et de développement
CONCORD Trade and EU-Africa Working Group

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Foreword

Two years after the approval of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) in Lisbon, progress in the Partnership on Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure is still lagging behind.

Therefore, civil society representatives from Africa and Europe ask to address these shortcomings of the Action Plan 2008–2010 and identify improvements for the next

Action Plan. The following recommendations to promote local and regional markets in support of rural development and regional integration were formulated at the workshop “The Africa-EU Partnership on Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure: Putting Rural Development First”, held in Bonn on the 26th November 2009. The workshop was organised by VENRO with the support of CONCORD.

The Africa-EU Partnership on Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure: Recommendations for a people- and poverty-oriented approach

Enhanced trade, especially within and between African countries, strengthened regional integration and the promotion of infrastructure are essential to development. Therefore, this Partnership has an important role to fulfil within the JAES. In view of the focus outlined in the Action Plan 2008–2010, the predominance of export-oriented growth and a top-down approach in infrastructure development seems to be guiding the priority areas and actions. Rural de-

velopment only plays a marginal role yet it has a huge potential for poverty reduction. The food crisis in 2008 made the importance of a paradigm change vis-à-vis rural development evident. More than 80 percent of Africa's poor people live in rural areas. With its people-centred approach, the Africa-EU Strategy can hardly avoid attributing a key role to agriculture.



Recommendations

1. The Partnership on Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure is a top-down and externally-driven process. In order to change it into a people-driven and bottom-up process in the current and future measures and activities should clearly involve community based organisations and small-scale farmers at the grassroots levels, including their priority needs in the development and decision-making processes. The roles of the small-scale farmers should also be clearly identified.
2. The activities of the Action Plan should be guided by a rights-based approach.
3. The Partnership seems to address large enterprises. Transnational corporations seem to be the key actors. This suggests a market approach that favours investment climate over an inclusive market approach – with the latter being essential to promote coherence between trade and development policy in this Partnership. To make sure that the market works for the poor, a more differentiated approach to the private sector is needed. This approach distinguishes between transnational companies and well organised business, on the one hand, and small and medium enterprises and micro-enterprises on the other. This will ensure that the interests and needs of, for example, women and the youth, enterprises and small-scale farmers are promoted.
4. The Partnership is guided by an export-oriented model aiming at promoting trade liberalisation. As the JAES is a forum of political dialogue, it is well placed to question the merits of the dominant models of development and discuss pluralist and alternative models of development.
5. The Partnership seems to be a bureaucracy-driven process lacking involvement of African member states and Regional Economic Communities – a prerequisite for any meaningful promotion of regional integration. Civil society representatives are calling on African leaders to elaborate a common (agricultural) strategy that forms the basis for regional integration and prioritises support to local and regional market building.
6. The Partnership puts a strong emphasis on regional integration. Yet this is contradicted by the JAES explicitly excluding discussions on the negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), although the EPAs have far-reaching implications on the regional integration process in Africa. Therefore, JAES should take EPAs into account. Civil Society as a stakeholder in JAES could add value to prevent premature conclusion of EPAs that are not development friendly.

Decent work and rural development

Trade and infrastructure are considered as the motor of development and wealth creation helping to overcome poverty. The prevalent source of income in rural areas is in the agricultural sector. Work and employment in this sector are mostly informal. People work as self-employed, unpaid family members or wage-earners. Labour is mostly casual, daily and seasonal and in some countries provided by migrants, with high incidents of child and slave labour. The prevalence of informality in the sector also means that agricultural workers have little or no access to social protection, be it health, sick leave or unemployment benefits. In order to achieve Millennium Development Goal 1, its target 2, “achieve full and productive employment and decent work”, is most urgent in rural areas and pushes rural development into the forefront of the agenda.

The Partnership on Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure aims at enhancing trade and, increasing production mainly for export orientation. Intervention measures under this Partnership will impact on the food supply chain and income distribution along it. However, the Partnership does not pay attention to the first sequence of the food supply chain in the rural area that is the farm gate price and working conditions. Thus it becomes necessary to promote decent work in rural areas as an essential principle in the implementation of this partnership. In order for workers in the agricultural sector to have the possibility of working their way out of poverty, the four pillars of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Decent Work Agenda must be implemented.

Recommendations

1. Knowledge of the informal economy, its high relevance for rural employment and the mechanisms developed by the ILO towards ensuring that decent work is integrated in informal employment relations need to be heeded. Therefore, the actors of the JAES are advised to recognise the role of civil society organisations (CSO) in participatory research and that of the ILO in implementing innovative solutions and ensure that both CSO research and ILO best practices are taken into account.
2. African countries as members of the ILO are meant to implement the 1998 Declaration of Fundamental Freedoms and Rights at Work, comprising the Core Labour Standards which are one pillar of the ILO Concept of Decent Work. Therefore, any investment, Foreign Direct Investment and local or national investment should be compliant with ILO core labour standards. African and EU Governments should live up to their commitments, and should engage in awareness-raising on people's rights and empowerment to promote adherence to ILO core labour standards. Furthermore and in line with the ILO's Social Security for All campaign, African and EU governments should explore options for the financing and operation of social protection schemes.
3. The African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) as developed by the UN Economic Commission of Africa looks into informal economic sectors and different levels, that is, social, economic and political empowerment, and gender division in the labour market. The Partnership should support documentation of and be informed by economic realities of informal markets and women and male economic actors in the informal economy – and decent work status therein.
4. Privatisation under structural adjustment programmes and decentralisation have led to increased informalisation and weakening of decent work in rural development. Increasingly, industrialised sectors and food processing are moving to the hubs, the urban areas, to the cities, that is to the centre and administrative districts. The impoverishment of the rural areas has led to the weakening of agricultural sectors, lack of infrastructure and supply capacity, and has, in turn, a negative impact on ever more precarious working conditions. To remedy this situation, extension service and labour inspection have to be upgraded and technical capacity of both employers unions and governments to implement labour laws improved. Particular attention should be paid to the role of social dialogue, including with associations of informal workers and local authorities, in improving the working conditions of agricultural workers. Funds must be made available for this purpose.
5. JAES actors are advised to learn from the best practice of fair trade supply chains and explore its potential to bridge or act as an intertwining of the formal and the informal sector: it creates food chains that start with the production in rural development and integration into formalised export sector. It brings decent work into the informal sector, for example increased wages, prices, infrastructure, and health, and creates incentives.



Infrastructure for smallholders and small and medium producers in rural areas

The importance of infrastructure for sustainable African development is undisputed. Not only does insufficient investment in infrastructure hinder local, regional and international trade and impede production, entrepreneurial development and employment creation, but the lack of it also affects all other areas of development as well as achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Today, over 40 percent of the African population lack access to clean water, while 60 percent do not have access to sanitation and less than 20 percent have access to electricity. The rural networks are in a poor state, and some areas are completely inaccessible during the rainy season.

The Africa-EU Partnership on Trade, Regional Integration and Infrastructure aims to facilitate private in-

vestments in transport networks; water and energy infrastructures; information and communication technology networks and related services in order to interconnect the African continent, further regional and continental integration and expand Africa's participation in global trade. Within the Partnership, the EU financially particularly supports large cross-national projects.

Although the engagement of the EU and its efforts to drastically increase investments into these infrastructure projects are laudable, the question arises as to whether these projects will benefit local communities and smallholders rather than the big, export-oriented enterprises and large-scale plantations.

Recommendations

1. The goal of infrastructure development should be to address education, health, food security, water, employment creation and access to basic social services. Thus we recommend that infrastructure for development should focus more on providing economic opportunities for smaller and poorer economic actors and traders in the rural economy, and improve linkages of rural to urban markets.
2. African governments primarily hold responsibility for infrastructure development in their respective countries. As much as we appreciate JAES investing in this area with a priority set for infrastructure, projects have to respond to priorities that service broader and poorer segments in rural sectors. The African governments should be accountable for infrastructural development in their countries.
3. Infrastructural development should be part of the democratic process integrating all stakeholders in a participatory manner. These must be valid for the decisions in the partnership, including those on the allocation of funds. There is a need to step up the management and accountability on utilisation of funds for infrastructure development.
4. There is a need to invest and focus more on small-scale schemes for agriculture in Africa. Rain-fed agriculture is always unreliable, especially of climate change and global warming.

Access to finance and investment in human resources in rural development

The current food crisis and the economic and financial crisis are having an impact not only on the G 20 and the export industries in developing countries but also on the rural economies and farmers in the African countries. They are affected because agriculture has been a subject neglected both by Africa and the EU. Lessons from Structural Adjustment Programmes clearly show the damaging effect of reducing institutional capacity in African governments to support farmers to produce food. This has contributed to most of the African countries becoming net importers of food and has led to only small investments in food production of the local population.

Access to extension services that improve farmers' capabilities to combine their traditional with new knowledge and to use organic methods for sustainable management of agricultural resources such as water, soil and biodiversity

is of utmost importance. Increasing knowledge of women farmers and decreasing dependency of male farmers on external inputs that are often not affordable is a key to improving household economy, nutrition and food supply.

It is very difficult to get access to microcredit financing in rural areas. Therefore, improving all conditions of access to advice, agro-ecological farming methods and financing for the rural population living in poverty should be a major concern of the Partnership on Trade, Infrastructure and Regional Integration. Women in Africa are among the poorest in all developing countries. Women still eat and earn less and also have limited access to loans, extension services and new knowledge or any help schemes. In contrast, women do excellent credit management and are responsible for 80 percent of food security in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Recommendations

1. A bottom-up approach is needed that is adaptable to local needs. The majority of people in African countries, mostly women, depend on agriculture. Therefore, food security has to be put first. Discrimination of smallholder (peasant) agriculture ignores their potential and should end.
2. The conditions of small-scale farmers have to be improved regarding access to land (ownership, control), finance and loans, education, knowledge of organic farming methods and expertise.
3. Women and young people have to be brought back into the spotlight of development, regarding all areas, but if men are left out, violence towards women will increase. This means that a gender-sensitive development is needed. That explicitly addresses constraints and opportunities for men and women farmers alike.
4. Access to finance for rural areas is urgently needed. This has to be linked to education, training and capacity building to make investment productive and sustainable.
5. There is a need to put in place farmer-friendly credit schemes in Africa since agriculture is a highly risky industry. This may include insurance schemes to protect and cushion farmers from adverse and unpredictable rain systems and weather.
6. There is a lack of civil society participation at all levels: more stakeholders at local and regional levels are needed to bring in their interest, positions and needs. Funds for mobilisation and strengthening of rural and social movements have to be made available.
7. Development inputs for agricultural production have to be adapted to local and regional needs.
8. Accountability and responsibility of local and national politicians should be increased.

Participants of the workshop

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VENRO currently has 118 members

* Guestmember



VENRO is the umbrella organisation of development non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Germany. The Association was founded in 1995 and consists of around 120 organisations. Their backgrounds lie in independent and church-related development co-operation, humanitarian aid as well as development education, public relations and advocacy. 16 one-world networks are part of VENRO. These represent about 2,000 local development initiatives and NGOs.

www.venro.de



CONCORD is the European confederation of Relief and Development NGOs. Its 24 national associations and 18 international networks represent over 1,600 NGOs which are supported by millions of citizens across Europe. CONCORD leads reflection and political actions and regularly engages in dialogue with the European institutions and other civil society organisations.

www.concordeurope.org



With the project "Prospects for Africa – Europe's Policies", VENRO seeks an active civil society contribution to the implementation of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership. The project builds on co-operation with African partners that began during VENRO's successful EU Presidency Project in 2007. VENRO member organisations then worked together with their African partners to develop statements for policy-makers, the media and the interested public on the main topics of the project: energy and climate policies, regional integration and trade; and gender.

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