



Conclusions and Recommendations from the Civil Society and Local Action Day Addis Ababa, 9th October 2022

The African continent is experiencing the worst food crisis in decades. Across the sub-Saharan region, millions of people are facing unprecedented multiple threats to their food security, with famine (IPC Phase 5) projections in several locations¹ in the absence of urgent, multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance and long-term sustainable solutions.

Communities and their livelihoods are affected by recurrent drought, flood and other climate hazards, protracted conflict and violence, record high food prices and inflation, and macroeconomic challenges, exacerbated by the economic downturn and supply chain disruptions from the Covid-19 pandemic and global insecurity.

Under the current circumstances, no single government, actor, or organisation can tackle these challenges on its own. Instead, all stakeholders – be it National Governments, regional organisations, particularly the African Union, Regional Economic Communities', the UN and International NGOs, national and local NGOs and Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, and donor countries must work together to raise ambitions, align approaches, minimise duplication, and maximise resources to address the current crisis in the immediate, medium and long term.

Over the years, the African Union Commission (AUC) developed several instruments to support sustainable solutions for addressing the challenges of food security and nutrition and dedicated its 2022 theme of the year to Food Security and Nutrition. This theme builds on the African Common Position on Food Security endorsed by the AU Member States in July 2021 ahead of the UN Food Systems Summit in September 2021 and was later cemented by the second AU humanitarian summit in Malabo in May 2022.

As civil society actors we remain committed to our role of community frontline responders. In times of crisis, we will contribute our knowledge of local and national contexts to ensure humanitarian responses help resolve root causes of need and vulnerability, build peaceful contexts where people can thrive, tackle inequality, and support development. We will help raise the alarm, communicate the urgency of more funding and orient towards proven solutions. We will help our governments identify and pursue new ways to finance humanitarian needs, and to make the most of existing resources. We will support the implementation of AU policies and frameworks, and obligations under regional and international human rights and humanitarian law. We remain accountable to people in need of humanitarian assistance, and equally, we will hold donors to account on their commitments.

In recognition of the critical role of civil society in tackling the food security crisis now and in the years to come, local, national and regional humanitarian and development actors including women, youth and refugee representatives have come together to explore, discuss and agree on **locally led solutions and policy messages** to be presented at the High-level Conference convened by the AU, FAO, IFRC and ADB today.

We believe that ambitious and collective actions are urgently needed. These are:

- 1. Unlock resources for immediate response now.**

AU member states, donor countries, global financial institutions, and the private sector should unlock resources to respond to the crisis now. As a matter of urgency, AU member

¹ [Somalia Food Security Alert: September 5, 2022 - Somalia | ReliefWeb](#)

states should prioritise the national implementation of existing AU policy commitments aimed at addressing immediate humanitarian needs, such as allocating at least 1.5% of GDP towards humanitarian action. At the same time, AU member states should prevent and mitigate future food security and nutrition crises in line with AU policies, including by allocating 10% of national budgets to agriculture and 15% to health; facilitating the work and operations of African NGOs in the humanitarian sector; strengthening social protection systems and ratifying the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Citizens to Social Protection and Social Security. Accountability criteria should be included as part of AU peer review evaluation mechanisms on AU commitments, to strengthen good and inclusive governance.

2. Create multistakeholder consortia, expanding from traditional stakeholders to include decision makers at all levels, private sector, financial institutions and innovation hubs, governments, humanitarian and development actors, and academia.

A multistakeholder consortium provides an effective coordination mechanism where urgent pooled resources and investments can enable more ambitious action now, while also promoting sustainable solutions that reach more people and with stronger impact. These can be created at the country level and mirrored at the sub-regional and regional levels, with governments committing to develop enabling policies to encourage integrated multisectoral models, where stakeholders work in complementarity to achieve a common objective.

3. Encourage engagement and partnerships with private sector.

African governments should see the private sector as part of the solution to food security in Africa. Governments should incentivise, through conducive regulatory policy frameworks, the participation of the private sector to play a role in food systems and trade, bridging the gap between innovation, food security and nutrition. More specifically, they should seek engagement with those actors in the private sector that espouse corporate social responsibility and inclusive business models. This includes local and national social enterprises and start-ups to ensure that smaller scale, human-centred, and sustainable innovation can be brought to scale.

4. Mainstream community engagement and human-centred approaches into policy development and ensure local and indigenous knowledge systems are integral to building community and systemic resilience.

Bottom-up approaches must be prioritised at all times, to ensure all stages of policy development, review and dissemination reflect local knowledge, grassroots priorities and mechanisms. AU member states must ensure that African humanitarian civil society, including youth-led, women-led and refugee-led organisations, are involved in policy development and have ownerships of it. In alignment with the localisation agenda, AU member states have an important role to play in creating a conducive environment that supports the contributions of African civil society in the humanitarian, food security and nutrition sectors and to ensure that locally led solutions are supported by investments and are integrated into better consolidated policies and systems.

5. The AU Humanitarian Agency should include representation from African NGOs in its leadership, including female and youth representatives. This will ensure that the AU Humanitarian Agency is able to empower African NGOs to lead in crisis response and provide them with funding and opportunities for engaging with and receiving feedback from communities directly affected by humanitarian crises. Such approach will also contribute to encourage good governance principles and processes across the African continent.

6. Invest in substantive social safety nets to support populations that are most vulnerable to and affected by the effects of the climate crisis, ensuring those schemes become more shock responsive and anticipatory.

This includes longer-term regular and predictable cash and other transfers that allow the most vulnerable and affected to protect, restore and diversify livelihoods and assets and increase the level of preparedness and resilience. Only 17% of the population in Africa is effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit.² Citizen engagement should promote social contracts with governments to invest more in social safety nets. The AU and African Development Bank have a key role to play in enabling social protection systems to happen at scale. In areas prone to disasters, they should scale-up prioritisation of, and sustained investments in, people-centred risk-informed early warning systems and anticipatory and early action approaches and capabilities, as well as programmes that enable the drawdown of humanitarian funding to support early action, based on in-depth forecast information (e.g. Forecast-based financing).

7. Promote climate adaptation strategies to ensure that food systems are climate-smart and resilient to climate shocks and invest in insurance mechanisms that can be adapted in areas highly prone to disasters and food insecurity.

The food security crisis is about inequities in the global food system and who carries the burden of climate change. Larger investments in climate adaptation that starts at the community level with grassroots food systems across the African continent are needed and must be scaled up both in policy and programmes. AU and its Member states should consider investing increasing amount of climate finance towards nature-based solutions – i.e. natural systems and processes used to help societal goals – as there is growing evidence that they contribute to minimise climate change and its effects, and can therefore be part of the solution. AU member states should accelerate the adoption of national legislation reflective of International Disaster Response Law, policies and plans to ensure integrated approaches to adaptation.

8. In contexts where armed conflicts, insecurity and violence contribute to food insecurity, work towards ensuring respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and support local peacebuilding initiatives.

The international community should encourage respect for IHL, including rules that protect civilians and civilian objects and facilitate access to rapid and unimpeded humanitarian relief. Creating synergies between members of the humanitarian, development and peace communities should be prioritised to address acute needs while building long term resilience, effectively promoting cohesive and strong communities. Support should be provided to local peacebuilding initiatives to reduce subnational and intercommunal violence that may arise due to population movements and increased competition for natural resources, especially in displacement contexts.

² https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-abidjan/documents/publication/wcms_828423.pdf and <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/WSPDB.action?id=19>