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priority theme: rethinking and strengthening social development
in the contemporary world**

Statement submitted by African Centre for Community and Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Strengthening Development in Sub-Saharan Africa via a People-based and Holistic Approach

Introduction, Objective and Purpose

This statement seeks to demonstrate that development in Sub-Saharan Africa can be more sustainable and strengthened via more inclusive interventions focussing on people's needs and via holistic development devices. It is based on relevant literature on the thematic areas of sustainable development in Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa and the experiences and tested practices by the African Centre for Community and Development (ACCD). It will also propose ideas on the way forward based on challenges faced locally in the region and within the organization.

Overview of issues and the work of African Centre for Community and Development in relevant spheres

Despite the fact that Africa is home to over 54 countries and is having some divergences in certain sub-environmental situations, global facts based on research exist that span across the entire region and its sub-populations, as well as in Sub-Saharan Africa. The United Nations estimated that 239 million people were hungry and undernourished in Sub-Saharan Africa out of 925 million globally. Sub-Saharan Africa had the largest proportion of undernourished people in the region — 30% of its population. Hunger and undernourishment have been exacerbated by many conflicts, environmental and climatic fallouts including droughts, climate change, skill and gender gaps as well as illiteracy. In 2008, 47 per cent of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa lived on 1.25 dollars or less in a day (United Nations, 2012) and at the end of 2011 the continent had 3.5 million refugees and 7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), which was 38% of the global total of 35.4 million of refugees, internally displaced persons and others of concern. The situation is made dire with low access to plant and animal proteins due to diminishing fisheries, unsustainable harvesting of juvenile fish, poor livestock-keeping mechanisms and diminishing rangelands, as well as poor use of adaptable green technologies including greenhouses, hydroponic and aquaculture systems.

The ACCD has conducted hundreds of stakeholders interviews in Cameroon and has worked in the broad areas of development management including fisheries, livestock keeping, civil society organizations, the general public and government research centres and internal activities in livestock keeping (pig, snail, goat, duck farming) and vegetable farming. A Research by ACCD concluded that development interventions must be people-based and holistic in order to more positively impact the lives of people in Sub-Saharan Africa. For this reason it has engaged in diverse activities that include the following:

It has created a Holistic Approach to Sustainable Development working group on LinkedIn with over 1,315 members; and a social and development networking and sharing platform (Hello Africa on Facebook) with over 5,000 members from across Africa and the globe who collaborate, contribute ideas and discuss/raise African and international issues. This is narrowing communication and policy gaps across the continent and helping the organization to work based on informed data and people's needs.

The ACCD has identified that working with women and youth will help valorize and vulgarize tested practices vital in fighting poverty, gender gaps and climate/environmental challenges. For this reason it has worked with over 100 women and youths in different areas of agriculture and agroforestry at its Green Cradle project where it grows food, conserves tropical biodiversity and is seeking to raise alternatives to threatened wildlife as a way of curbing food insecurity, fighting poaching and biodiversity destruction and educating vulnerable sub-populations on tested environmental successful devices. The ACCD is growing vegetables like medicinal bitter leaf and shrubs like moringa and cassava, which many research findings have indicated is the future crop for Africa based on its diverse uses and its capacity to resist adverse environmental conditions. ACCD is using multimedia, arts, ICTs and education workshops to engage community stakeholders and inform them on how to improve their lives or to overcome vulnerabilities. It has over 890 permanent subscribed members on newsfeeds on Facebook, 350 permanently subscribed on YouTube, 1315 subscribed on the Holistic Approach to Sustainable Development Group and over 5000 members on the Hello Africa group. It has received several hundreds of thousands of visits on landing pages on Google Plus, YouTube and Facebook. It is thus a hub for information on agriculture, sustainable development, African and global issues, solutions and best practices, increasingly recognized and accessed globally as well as in Africa and Cameroon.

Specific Examples and challenges

In order to valorize and vulgarize sustainable and tested practices, the ACCD has produced and published over 630 videos on YouTube on various thematic areas including advocacy, women rights, arts, sustainable development, environment, education, sustainable agriculture and the needs of the people of Africa and Cameroon. The Centre faces funding challenges to map even more people in interviews so that policymakers and donors will know what societies need, avoid waste, duplication and project failures in Cameroon and Africa. It faces difficulties in establishing a community radio which can be the fastest way of identifying local needs and sharing them globally. This is important as most sub-populations in Africa and in rural areas still depend on radios for news, health tips or for market information. With low levels of broadband locally, supporting the organization to establish an African development radio in Cameroon is a necessity. The organization is also facing challenges of training more people. Nevertheless, it has conducted remarkable workshops like “Fighting Poverty and Engaging Conservation through Sounds”, “Sustainable Strategies and Practices in Development” which entail financing for development, engaging with more resource persons and vocational education. The ACCD with the necessary support can use its local and international clout and knowledge base to establish one of the most vital vocational training centres in the region where courses such as agroforestry, permaculture, climate smart agriculture, green technologies, livestock keeping, arts, crafts and many livelihoods systems will be offered. It has a structure for the Centre but is in need of academic, electronic and other materials, plus trainers to launch the program.

Additionally, the ACCD has conserved biodiversity in the Green Cradle project and is growing food, including pepper and other vegetables. If supported, it will establish a free range park for alternatives to wildlife, which are increasingly threatened by poaching and population pressures including urbanization. This will fight poverty, increase access to proteins and vegetables as well as dissuade

dependence on endangered species including lions, raptors and great apes. If supported, it will use the Conserved Bamboo initiative at the Green Cradle to transform bamboo and to train local people on bamboo uses and farming, which is vital in reducing dependence on scarcer woods used locally for furniture and for energy (charcoal). Bamboo can be used to produce briquettes or to power generators for the production of biogas. With over 600 million people without electricity in Africa, supporting the ACCD in these ways, as well as in the construction of adaptable greenhouses (for year round farming) and fresh water fisheries within Green Cradle, will significantly improve food security, green knowledge systems, education, access to proteins, conservation of biodiversity, poverty reduction, empowerment of women and youth, communication and an enabling environment for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

A Way Forward and Expectations

The ACCD will continue to work to support development in Cameroon, Africa and the world while hoping that the international community and financial institutions or financing for development instruments will leverage the immense work it has done so far by supporting the organization's intentions to develop a vocational training centre to improve on local skill sets and shrink gender gaps, an African community radio to facilitate development communication for adoption and replication, a Green Cradle Bamboo initiative to mitigate forest and mangrove degradation as well as a park to grow alternatives to wildlife for both food security, poverty alleviation, environmental protection and the conservation of biodiversity in Cameroon, Africa and the world.

References

Fish and Food Security in Africa by C. Béné and S. Heck

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<http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1683e/i1683e.pdf> .

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2012. "Global Trends 2011"

<http://www.unhcr.org/4fd6f87f9.html>

Videos by African Centre for Community and Development

<https://www.youtube.com/user/AfricanCentreforCom/videos>

Pepper Cassava and Green Cradle Project in Pictures

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.812604412127418.1073741838.103686769685856&type=3>

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.812594875461705.1073741837.103686769685856&type=3>

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<https://www.facebook.com/African-Centre-for-Community-and-Development-103686769685856/timeline/>

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