ASWAN FORUM
FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT
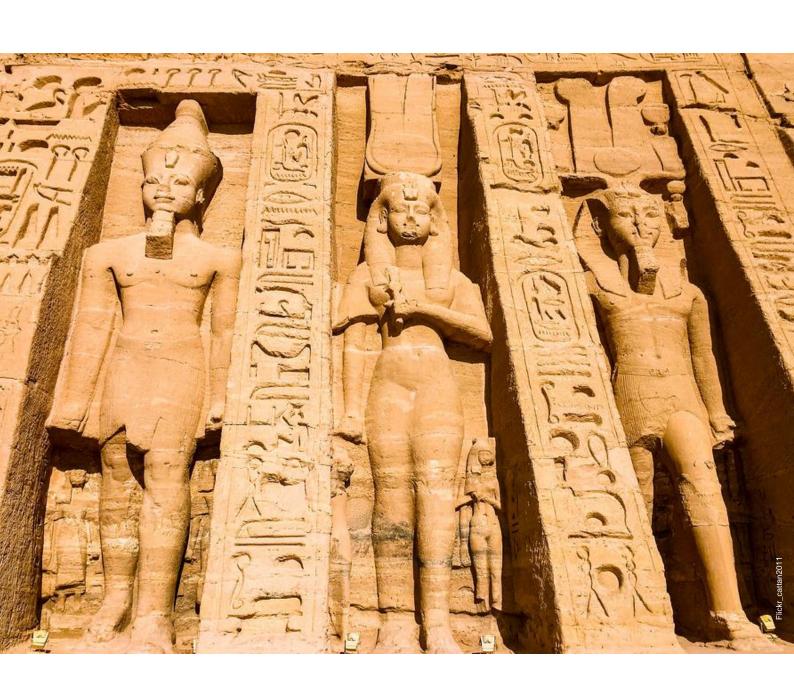مـنـتـدى اسـوان لـلـسـلام و الـتـنمية الـمستدامين

The Aswan Peace and Development Report

Shaping Africa's New Normal:
Recovering Stronger, Rebuilding Better

THE ASWAN
PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT

March 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DISCLAIMER

This report represents a combination of evidence-based research and the collation of non-attributable opinions and recommendations shared by official and expert participants during five preparatory webinars for the second edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development, organized by the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCPA) - between July and November 2020.

This report is intended as a forward-looking, action-oriented and thought-provoking conversation starter. The opinions and recommendations included in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the Aswan Forum Secretariat: The Cairo International Center for Conflict, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank
Africa CDC	Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
AMISOM	AU Mission in Somalia
AU	African Union
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FDPs	Forcibly Displaced Populations
GBV	Gender-based Violence
HDPN	Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MSMEs	Micro-Small-and-Medium-Sized Enterprises
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission
PCG	Partial Credit Guarantees
PCRD	Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development
PIDA	Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa
PRG	Partial Risk Guarantees
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RMs	Regional Mechanisms
SIF	Somalia Infrastructure Fund
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TSF	Transition Support Facility
UN	United Nations
UNAMID	United Nations–African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
WHO	World Health Organization
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

THE ASWAN FORUM

Egypt, the Champion of Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) in Africa and the current Chair of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), is pleased to host the second edition of the **Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development.**

Owned by Africa, and supported by international and regional partners, the Forum is a high-level, multi-stakeholder platform that brings heads of state, leaders from national governments, international and regional organizations, financial institutions, the private sector and civil society, together with visionaries, scholars and prominent experts, for a context-specific, action-oriented and forward-looking discussion on the opportunities, as well as the challenges, facing the continent – amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

It provides the first-of-its-kind platform in Africa that seeks to operationalize the "peace-development nexus", by championing African solutions to African problems, including through strengthening the links between policy and practice.

https://www.aswanforum.org/

THE CAIRO INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION, PEACEKEEPING AND PEACEBUILDING (CCCPA)

Founded in 1994 by the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCPA), is an Egyptian public agency specialized in capacity building, convening and research in the fields of sustaining peace and development in Africa and the Arab region. CCCPA is also an African Union Center of Excellence and the only civilian training center on issues of peace and security in the Arab region. Through its research and convening activities, it has established itself as a leading voice from the Global South on a wide range of topics, including conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, preventing radicalization and extremism leading to terrorism, women, peace and security, transnational threats and climate, security and development.

https://www.cairopeacekeeping.org/

FOREWORD

Resetting Africa's Trajectory Towards Sustainable Peace and Development

Dear Reader,

At a time when the world continues to grapple with the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa is presented with a unique opportunity to reset its trajectory towards sustainable peace and development. At this critical juncture, African leadership and concerted action are essential to advancing a positive agenda as the continent pursues post COVID-19 recovery.

We already witnessed an example of such leadership and concerted action at the outset of the pandemic--marking a new dawn of reinvigorated African solidarity and proactivity. African Heads of State spearheaded their response to the pandemic, mitigating its health impacts and cushioning the possible socioeconomic fallout.   However, the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing structural vulnerabilities and challenges ranging from armed conflict, to terrorism, humanitarian crises.

To recover stronger and rebuild better, Africa must unleash its enormous potential to overcome the complex developmental, political, and peace and security challenges it faces alongside the pandemic. African countries must accelerate the shift away from crisis management and move towards prevention and resilience building; embracing a pathway for sustainable peace and development.

To unlock this potential, inter-African connectivity at all levels could not be more crucial. Engines for such transformation include accelerating intra-African trade through operationalization of the African Free Trade Continental Agreement (AfCFTA); investing in infrastructure; and promoting digitalization--all while ensuring the inclusion of African women and youth as critical partners.

Leveraging on its unique position as Champion of Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development in Africa and Chair of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, Egypt is pleased to host the second edition of the **Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development** under the theme **"Shaping Africa's New Normal: Recovering Stronger, Rebuilding Better"**.

Grounded in the AU Agenda 2063, the Aswan Forum provides a timely opportunity to make Africa's voice heard on a range of issues from global equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, to the need of comprehensive approaches and long-term measures to advance the operationalization of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus across the continent, including through robust partnerships.

We look forward to the discussions and the concrete recommendations as Africa forges its pathway to recover stronger and rebuild better.

Sameh Shoukry
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Arab Republic of Egypt

The Aswan Forum Cycle: Translating Ideas into Action in a New Normal

Dear Reader,

The second edition of the Aswan Forum is taking place amid exceptional circumstances as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to sweep across the globe. While the pandemic has disrupted our lives and traditional working environment, it has also brought to the fore new opportunities to deliberate and exchange thanks to digital technologies. Seizing these opportunities, the Aswan Forum is taking place virtually enabling wide and inclusive engagement.

Building on the remarkable success of the first edition, the second edition aims to contribute towards shaping a pathway for a stronger and better Africa post-pandemic. The Forum will continue to provide a platform to amplify African voices, through forward-looking and action-oriented discussions, anchoring the continent's recovery efforts in a sustainable peace and development paradigm, with prevention and resilience at its core.

This year's Forum introduces dedicated discussions on new themes that can make a potent contribution towards advancing peace and security on the continent but whose potential remains largely untapped. They include climate action, trade, infrastructure and digitalization, critical engines for post-COVID-19 recovery, as well as culture, arts and heritage, the AU's theme for 2021.

In addition, the second edition of the Forum is launching the Aswan Youth Dialogue and the Aswan Strategic Dialogue. The first seeks to strengthen the voice of African youth in shaping the sustainable peace and development agenda at a critical juncture when they are also actively engaged in forging innovative solutions to help overcome the current crisis. The second brings together eminent personalities, practitioners and thought leaders in international affairs to reflect on the changing global landscape, and how Africa can contribute to the reinvigorated multilateralism needed in response to the pandemic.

The Aswan Forum is grounded in a robust preparatory process, that brings together experts and representatives of national governments, regional and international organizations and academia to discuss some of the continent's most pressing issues and challenges; from terrorism in the shadow of the pandemic, advancing the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in a new normal; to mainstreaming migration in national development policies and tackling climate-related security and development risks.

As we embark on the second edition, it has become increasingly evident that the Aswan Forum is not just an event. It is both a platform and a partnership imprinted into a larger framework aiming to advance meaningful change. Through its preparatory process and concrete implementation agenda, the Aswan Cycle provides a holistic process whereby cutting-edge knowledge and research inform high-level deliberations, which translate into action-oriented recommendations. Going forward, there will be increased attention on the implementation of the Aswan Forum Conclusions, through strategic partnerships with a range of stakeholders including CCCPA as the Secretariat of the Aswan Forum.

The need for African leadership, solidarity and active engagement with the rest of the world has never been more important to ensure that the continent emerges from this pandemic stronger and more resilient than ever before.

Thank you for joining the conversation and for working with us to translate ideas into action in a new normal.

Ahmed Abdel-Latif
Director General of CCCPA and Head of the Aswan Forum Secretariat

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic presents Africa with an opportunity to reset its trajectory towards sustainable peace and development. In addition to its devastating health and socio-economic impacts, the pandemic has magnified structural vulnerabilities across different sectors in Africa, revealing the weaknesses of response mechanisms and crisis management tools. It hit at a time when the continent was already grappling with protracted violence and conflict, security threats and concurrent crises. The convergence of these intersecting threats reconfigured dynamics on the ground and pressured humanitarian, development and peace actors to recalibrate their priorities and adjust to changing reality.

The overstretched capacity of national, regional, continental and international actors to respond to concurrent threats accentuates the inherent importance of the nexus between peace and development. Violence and fragility jeopardize the resilience of institutions, while additional threats, such as COVID-19 and climate change, undermine efforts for peace consolidation. This highlights the imperative for placing conflict prevention and sustaining peace at the core of recovery pathways. The pandemic also puts the resilience of stakeholders to the test, highlighting their varying abilities to withstand and adapt to the "new normal" and reaffirming the imperative to accelerate the "paradigm shift" from crisis management to sustainable peace and development, by means of a holistic response across the "peace-development continuum" - as concluded by the first edition of the Aswan Forum.[1]

Building on the Conclusions of the first edition of the Aswan Forum, the *second edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development under the theme "Shaping Africa's New Normal: Recovering Stronger, Rebuilding Better",* seeks to put forward a positive and ambitious agenda, as Africa charters on its pathway for recovery post COVID-19. The Forum aims to shed light on new and emerging systemic threats, challenges and risks to peace, security and development in the wake of the pandemic, and identify concrete and action-oriented recommendations to accelerate the shift from crisis management to prevention and resilience-building towards sustainable peace and development, while pinpointing priority areas of reform and identifying approaches to strengthen coherence and complementarity between humanitarian, development and peace actors.

Key Takeaways:

- **The COVID-19 pandemic is a multi-system challenge with far-reaching and multi-faceted consequences.** It has laid bare structural weaknesses in healthcare systems, reverberating shocks across the socio-economic realm and hitting the most vulnerable the hardest. Although the COVID-19 pandemic is both a health and socio-economic crisis, its implications have spilled over into the peace and security landscape, exacerbating pre-existing structural vulnerabilities, while undermining the resilience of governments and affected communities.

- **The pandemic accentuates the inherent nexus between peace and development and the imperative for advancing coherence and complementarity across humanitarian, development and peace actors in a proactive manner.** It has exploited structural developmental weaknesses, unemployment and loss of livelihood, which—if not dealt with early on in a preventive and anticipatory manner—could transform into peace and security risks, while augmenting humanitarian needs and compromising the response capacity of governments, particularly in the midst of concurrent crises.

- **Development is a key enabler and guarantor for peace and a cornerstone of resilience.** The pandemic has highlighted that long-term investments in critical developmental sectors, such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, sustainable energy,

digitalization and trade could strengthen the resilience of governments and societies against threats–be it security threats or unconventional ones.[2] This could mitigate the reverberation and extension of threats into broader systems.

- **A two-pronged approach to addressing the impact of COVID-19 across the African continent is crucial.** Working in parallel with response efforts aiming to alleviate the immediate health and socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, African stakeholders must build on the renewed continental solidarity emerging in response to the pandemic. This should be used as an opportunity to catalyze transformation across the continent and accelerate the paradigm shift from crisis management to prevention and resilience-building.

- **Africa's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted reinvigorated leadership, solidarity and cooperation in the face of the crisis.** Leveraging on its past history in addressing disease outbreaks, such as Malaria and Ebola, Africa has been able to benefit from past experiences and lessons learned to face COVID-19. The continent was quick in addressing the emerging repercussions, with African heads of state spearheading anti-pandemic efforts.

- **In response to the pandemic's immediate health and socio-economic repercussions, continental, regional, national and local actors took proactive measures.** Responses included governmental stimulus and relief packages, joint response programs, gender-sensitive response guidelines, COVID-19-specific response plans and funds to limit the spread of the virus. Within these responses, strategies coordinated efforts of different actors to ensure synergy and minimize duplication of efforts. This also created space to adopt holistic approaches to address both immediate and long-term repercussions of COVID-19.

- **The responses to the pandemic shed light on both the strengths and weaknesses of response mechanisms in Africa, reiterating the need to shift to a resilience paradigm that unlocks key pillars of untapped potential.** In order to 'rebuild better' it is crucial for governments, the private sector and civil society to work closer together to promote innovation, digitalization, advance regional integration, and invest in sustainable energy solutions – while ensuring that women and youth are empowered as critical partners on the frontlines of the pandemic and beyond.

- **The convergence of the pandemic with protracted violence, security threats and other concurrent crises, such as climate change, has reconfigured dynamics on the ground and compelled humanitarian, development and peace actors to recalibrate their priorities.** Peacekeeping operations, peacebuilding and humanitarian actors are faced with the multiple burdens of adapting their work and activities, addressing the pandemic's emerging and immediate needs and delivering on their mandates. Likewise, governments and international actors have re-allocated their resources towards the COVID-19 response, exacerbating the financing deficit for other priority areas, including counterterrorism operations, climate adaptation and resilience, as well as humanitarian operations.

Anchoring post COVID-19 recovery in a prevention and resilience paradigm requires multi-layered, concerted and comprehensive interventions across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. Against this backdrop, this report identifies six key areas of intervention to chart Africa's recovery pathway towards sustainable peace and development, as follows:

1. Addressing the Governance Challenge
   The COVID-19 pandemic is –first and foremost– a governance challenge. African governments should invest in building resilient and viable state institutions -- reinforcing the notion of national ownership. Such institutions should be able to address both the immediate needs imposed by systemic shocks like the pandemic, and the long-standing structural vulnerabilities that require long-term, sustained and sequenced engagements.

2. Operationalizing Structural Prevention
   Structural prevention entails identifying and addressing systemic weaknesses, which often evolve overtime, with the potential of causing violent conflicts–if they remain unaddressed. African states must strengthen capacities of national mechanisms to assess systemic vulnerabilities and pockets of fragility, as well as resilience pillars, while integrating the outcome of these assessments into national planning and programming. These endeavors should be supported by regional, continental and international actors.

3. The Centrality of Inclusion
   Inclusivity has to be mainstreamed across the different phases of any intervention: starting from the designing process and defining the means of implementation, to measuring impact and monitoring progress. Governments and their external partners should ensure that interventions are participatory, integrated and responsive to the real needs of local populations as they see them.

4. Working Together Across the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus
   Humanitarian, development and peace actors should engage in setting collective outcomes through joint approaches and frameworks–while embracing complexity in collective planning, designing and implementation of programs and projects. This serves to holistically address immediate needs, while simultaneously ensuring investment in longer-term sustainable peace and development.

5. Harnessing Engines for Sustainable Recovery
   While infrastructure, trade, energy and digitalization are key engines to sustainable peace and development, their potential is not fully realized. As such, national policymakers should devise policies and regulations to de-risk the investment environment and attract private sector participation to deliver critical projects and services in the infrastructure, digitalization, sustainable energy and trade sectors. This can be achieved through the removal of structural barriers and advancement of innovative finance – primarily through private sector engagement to intensify investment in critical economic sectors.

6. Scaling Up Financing for Sustainable Peace and Development
   The magnitude of the complex, multi-dimensional, interlinked, and evolving drivers of fragility reiterates the imperative of strengthened partnerships and tailored, flexible and high-impact financing, including innovative financing, for peacebuilding. These mechanisms benefit particularly the poorest and most vulnerable communities. Creating these enabling conditions reduces vulnerabilities, strengthens capacities and fosters resilience to fully harness the tremendous potential of the African continent.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Peace and Development in Africa: A Magnifier of Systemic Weaknesses

Since its outbreak, the COVID-19 pandemic has permeated borders, health and economic sectors, and the daily lives of individuals across the globe.[3] In Africa, as of 25 February 2021, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases is over 3.5 million, with more than 3 million recoveries and 91,000 deaths. During the first wave of the pandemic, Africa was not hit as hard as other continents with a case-fatality ratio lower than the global average.[4] However, this is no longer the case in the second wave of the pandemic, which carries new variants of the virus. According to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), the second wave is more contagious and has a higher average of reported cases and continental death rate. Currently, the case-fatality ratio in Africa accounts to 2.6 percent–compared to 2.2 percent of the global average,[5] while reported cases have increased by 39 percent.[6]

This elucidates that, while the pandemic has caused serious disruptions to healthcare systems over the past year, the full impact of the pandemic and its ripple effect across different sectors and systems is yet to be realized. Compounding this, countries affected by protracted and intersecting crises, including terrorism and extremism, extreme weather events, climate-induced displacement, transnational organized crime, among others, are at a heightened risk, where these overlapping crises exacerbate pre-existing structural vulnerabilities,[7] creating new challenges. This in turn compromises the resilience of governments and affected communities.[8] Across the African continent, the interplay between this myriad of threats has elevated the risk of instability, loss of livelihoods,

increased influence of non-state armed groups, destruction of infrastructure, while undermining continental efforts to achieve the goals of the African Union (AU) Silencing the Guns in Africa Roadmap (extended to 2030), the AU Agenda 2063, and the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The pandemic accentuates the inherent nexus between peace and development, and the imperative for advancing coherence and complementarity across humanitarian, development and peace actors. On one hand, conflict and fragility continue to be among the continent's biggest challenges and prime impediments to building resilience, achieving sustainable development and addressing external shocks. On the other hand, weaknesses across the developmental sectors, particularly health and economic sectors, have put many at risk of unemployment and loss of livelihood, which–if not addressed early on in a preventive and anticipatory manner—could exacerbate fragility and transform into peace and security risks, including resorting to illegal coping alternatives, the erosion of social trust and the use of violence. At the same time, the weakened response capacity of governments–particularly in the midst of concurrent crises–to meet the immediate needs of affected communities and provide basic goods and services has provided the opportunity for non-state armed groups (NSAG) to fill the governance vacuum and solidify their influence over marginalized communities.[9]

The pandemic is a multi-system challenge with far-reaching and multi-faceted consequences. It has exacerbated structural weaknesses in healthcare systems,

triggering a cascade of risks across the socio-economic realm, with spillovers into the humanitarian, development and peace, and security landscapes.[10] The pandemic reiterates crucial lessons about the inherent characteristics of systemic risks.[11] In particular, it sheds light on the complex, interdependent and dynamic functioning of systemic risks, reinforcing the importance of embracing complexity when diagnosing and devising solutions for systemic challenges.

On the health front, countries with under-funded and ill-equipped healthcare systems were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic–this is particularly alarming for Africa. Healthcare systems across the African continent are under-resourced, with lower proportions of available hospital beds, intensive care units and health professionals in comparison to the global average.[12] These existing vulnerabilities were further exacerbated by the pandemic, augmenting problems across the continent's healthcare systems as well as influencing counteracting responses and efforts.

Further complicating the situation, the global economic downturn–coupled with national precautionary measures to contain the transmission of the virus–quickly reverberated shocks across economic systems in Africa.[13] According to the World Bank, economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) fell to about 3.7 percent, with a decline of 6.1 percent in per capita income.[14] The tourism sector–which accounts for 13 percent of SSA's gross domestic product (GDP)–was hit the hardest. It is estimated that 12.4 million jobs in the tourism industry–more than half of the tourism employment in Africa–were lost due to international travel restrictions.[15]

Likewise, Africa's informal sector–which comprises about 85.8 percent of its total labor force–was severely impacted.[16] As a result, the continent witnessed an unprecedented surge in unemployment, particularly among young people. To cushion the devastating economic impact of COVID-19, governments released stimulus and relief packages. This increased their fiscal deficits and pushed them to resort to high-cost borrowing, aggravating the external debt-to-GDP ratio to alarming levels. As of July 2020, the external debt-to-GDP ratio had exceeded 100 percent in some countries across the continent.[17] This poses serious fiscal constraints on national budgets, making it difficult for governments to invest in critical public services–the prime enablers of sustainable development and sustaining peace, such as infrastructure, education, healthcare, digitalization and electrification, among others.[18]

The differentiated and disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on various groups across society, namely low-income households, women, youth, children, informal workers, migrants and refugees, is largely underpinned by long-standing structural socio-economic weaknesses. These structural weaknesses refer to the lack of policies, programs and laws that are inclusive, targeted and responsive to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different groups across society. This has resulted in increased precariousness of labor, weakened safety nets and financial vulnerability. According to 2019 World Bank estimates, the number of extreme poor was 439.8 million. This is projected to jump by 40 million by the end of 2021, reaching 483.9 million.[19]

On the humanitarian front, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) face particular vulnerabilities due to the over crowdedness of camps and urban settlements as well as their limited access to reliable water and sanitation services.[20] Migrants often lack access to adequate healthcare services and are often engaged in unsecure, low-wage jobs.[21] According to

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Africa is home to almost 26 million forcibly displaced persons, 18.5 million of which are internally displaced,[22] amounting to more than one-third of the global number of IDPs.[23]

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic implications have had adverse and disproportionate consequences on women and children. Globally, early estimates suggested that GBV rose by 25 percent[24]– termed the "shadow pandemic."[25] Likewise, the increasing resort to digital tools as a means of coping with the "new normal" has highlighted the digital gender divide across the African continent,[26] with a gender gap of 37 percent in access to mobile internet in SSA.[27] Furthermore, school closures have disrupted African children's learning process.[28] In the Sahel region alone, the confluence of COVID-19 and insecurity has forced 12.8 million children out of school.[29]

Deep-rooted structural weaknesses across different sectors and systems are prime determinants of the breadth and depth of risks that unfold from systemic challenges. This elucidates that while the COVID-19 pandemic is both a health and socio-economic crisis, its implications have extended to the peace and security landscape and reconfigured security dynamics, posing new challenges for affected communities and stakeholders. While structural weaknesses and inequalities--on their own–may not automatically generate violence, they can provide fertile grounds upon which grievances and perceptions of exclusion and disenfranchisement can thrive, increasing the risk of violence and conflict.[30]

Africa's Response to the Global Pandemic: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustaining Peace and Development

Now more than ever, Africa needs to invest in a vision that not only mitigates and responds to the immediate repercussions of the pandemic, but simultaneously paves the way for long-term sustainable peace and development that ensures the continent emerges out of this crisis stronger and more resilient than before.

A two-pronged approach to addressing the impact of COVID-19 across the African continent is therefore paramount. Parallel to response efforts aiming to alleviate the immediate health and socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, African stakeholders must build on the renewed continental solidarity emerging as a result of the pandemic by taking concerted steps to catalyze transformation across the continent and accelerate the paradigm shift from crisis management to conflict prevention and resilience-building.

Africa's response to the pandemic has been proactive, highlighting the utmost importance of leadership, solidarity and cooperation in the face of crises. Due to its history in addressing disease outbreaks, such as malaria and Ebola, Africa has been able to benefit from past experiences and lessons learned to face COVID-19. The continent was quick to address the emerging repercussions, with African heads of state leading the anti-pandemic efforts. The AU released the "Joint Africa Continental Strategy on COVID-19 fewer than six weeks after the first reported case in Egypt on 14 February 2020.[31] The AU also appointed four special envoys to mobilize funds and secure international economic and social support for Africa's

fight against COVID-19; as pledged by the G20, the European Union, and other financial institutions.[32]

Furthermore, the AU established guidelines to ensure gender-sensitive responses to conflict during the pandemic, and to create awareness about the impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.[33]

As part of the efforts to strengthen Africa's response and preparedness in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa CDC and UNDP created a joint program to coordinate COVID-19 responses with Member States, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), Civil Society Organizations and Faith-based Organizations.[34] The program encourages capacity building and knowledge sharing to ensure that AU member states adopt a holistic approach.[35]

Another successful example of multi-stakeholder collaboration and joint response to COVID-19 is demonstrated by the AU, Africa CDC, UNECA, and the African Export-Import Bank's collective effort to create the Africa Medical Supplies Platform, which allows AU Member States to purchase certified medical equipment such as diagnostic kits, personal protective equipment and clinical management devices with increased cost effectiveness & transparency.[36]

Regional organizations have also played an important role in complementing the AU's continental efforts to respond to COVID-19. In West Africa, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union have taken concerted steps to address the spread of COVID-19. ECOWAS designated President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria as the champion to coordinate efforts and put in place regional mechanisms that create linkages between West African States. This initiative opted

against designating a separate fund, and instead endowed contributions to the fund set up by the AU. Notwithstanding the key role played by the AU and regional organizations, national responses have been pivotal in ensuring that continental strategies and policies are implemented at the national level. More than two-thirds of SSA countries implemented COVID-related restrictive measures, with 60 percent of them declaring variations of a state of emergency; before or within ten days of their first declared case.[37]

At the national level, African states relied on existing frameworks as well as created new ones to respond to the impact of COVID-19. Algeria utilized its national scientific commission to respond to the pandemic, while Egypt, Mozambique, Morocco, Nigeria, Togo and Tunisia[38] established new technical, scientific, and monitoring committees and coordination mechanisms, response plans, or ministerial and inter-ministerial committees to manage COVID-19.[39] Furthermore, the majority of African states announced economic stimulus packages or increases in healthcare spending as a direct response to COVID-19.[40]

Global responses have partnered with and supported African national and regional efforts to create preparedness and response plans for COVID-19. The Somalia COVID-19 Country Preparedness and Response Plan provides a time-bound framework for the humanitarian, development and peace actors to adapt existing programs to the changing context as well as accelerate interventions aimed at mitigating the impact of COVID-19.[41]

Complementing these efforts, local actors and communities remain a crucial link in the responses to COVID-19, and in facing new and emerging risks. For example, Kenya local radio stations are helping to raise awareness about COVID-19 and gender-

based violence.[42] Another local initiative in Keta, a rural community in Ghana, is promoting agribusiness among women and youth to respond to food shortages and enhance food security during the pandemic.[43] In Liberia, local communities are playing a critical role as contact tracers, breaking the chain of transmission of COVID-19 and supporting health authorities in the most affected areas.[44]

Together, the aforementioned responses are essential, not only to address the short-term effects of the pandemic, but also to prevent the exacerbation of structural weaknesses and their transformation to full-blown risks, which could threaten the erosion of hard-won development and peace gains. This is particularly important for countries impacted by fragility, conflict and violence, which are at the greatest risk of being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

The Convergence of COVID-19 and Security Threats on the Ground: Perspectives from Across the Peace Continuum

The pandemic hit at a time when the African continent was already grappling with protracted armed conflict and violence. Over the past decade, crisis hotspots, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria, the Central African Republic and Libya, have witnessed increased violence, killings and displacement.

The convergence of the pandemic with protracted violence and other security threats has exerted additional pressures on, and overstretched, the resources of humanitarian, development, and peace actors. For instance, peace operations, peacebuilding and humanitarian actors are faced with the multiple burdens of adapting their work and activities, addressing the pandemic's emerging and immediate needs and meeting the objectives of their mandates. Additionally, governments and international actors have re-allocated their

resources towards the COVID-19 response, exacerbating the financing deficit for other priority areas, including counterterrorism operations, climate adaptation and resilience, as well as humanitarian operations. However, while governments are facing these compounded challenges, non-state armed groups have seized the opportunity to regain momentum, fill the governance vacuum and provide basic services and relief to affected communities.

Conscious of the myriad of threats at play and the fact that the pandemic has a particular and compounded impact in countries that are faced with protracted violence, this section examines the differentiated impact of the pandemic from various angles across the peace and security landscape in Africa. It also sheds light on the response capacity of relevant stakeholders to the pandemic and the related repercussions.

A. Weathering the Pandemic: How Have Peace Processes and Political Transitions Adapted?

In response to the pandemic, the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) seized the momentum of international solidarity to

issue an urgent appeal for a global ceasefire. Since March 2020, 180 countries, the UN Security Council (UNSCR), regional

organizations, civil society organizations and global citizens have rallied around the UNSG's call, but it has resulted in limited success on the ground.[45] Nonetheless, there has been momentous progress in multiple peace processes on the African continent, most notably; the signing of the Juba peace agreement in October 2020 and the recent developments achieved in the Libyan transition talks earlier this year.

2020 also witnessed an eventful election season for Africa, during which more than 20 countries conducted electoral processes, including both presidential and parliamentary elections.[46] In that context, social distancing measures have disrupted the traditional work methods and strategies of African election management bodies. However, some African states, most notably, Ghana, successfully held elections, further solidifying the process of democratic transition and reaffirming the centrality of investing in structural conflict prevention.

However, in some settings, elections were postponed, leading to the exacerbation of existing grievances and tensions. Additionally, lockdowns and strict precautionary measures, which prohibited gatherings, have led to the disruption of one of the core principles of peacemaking and peacebuilding practices: physical meetings. Bringing people together through face-to-face exchange is paramount for building trust, transforming relationships, strengthening social cohesion and bolstering a resilient social contract.

In response to the new reality posed by COVID-19, various actors have shifted their efforts to online platforms. While significantly less costly, such means of connection inherently harbor weaknesses. Online tools lack the measures needed to adequately safeguard the identities of actors involved.[47] Beyond the aspect of security and confidentiality, the usage of these tools also raises concerns about elite capture,[48] selection bias and access,[49] as well as gender blindness.[50] As such, affected groups on the ground—most notably women, IDPs and refugees—can often end up being left out of the conversation; risking the exacerbation of grievances and inequalities and rendering efforts to advance peace unsustainable.

In response to the pandemic, efforts and have primarily focused on immediate healthcare needs and the associated economic fallout. Meanwhile, official aid for peacebuilding, which was already facing a financing deficit prior to the pandemic, risks becoming underprioritized. This can be drawn back to donor countries undergoing domestic shifts in their politics, policies and spending priorities due to the global recession sparked by the pandemic.[51] In light of this, the real needs of those furthest left behind remain overlooked.[52] Specifically, food insecurity, extreme poverty and violence continue to constitute far more pressing threats to these populations.

While the pandemic poses serious challenges to peace processes and political transitions, it also brings to the fore potential opportunities to be leveraged. For instance, the shift to online tools should be regarded as a unique opportunity to localize peacebuilding efforts and more actively engage with women, youth and other local actors. This would ensure that their needs are not overlooked, thereby enhancing local ownership of peace processes.

Furthermore, despite the restrictions posed by COVID-19, there has been some progress on the policymaking front. The extension of the Silencing the Guns Roadmap until 2030, the successful conclusion of the 2020 UN Peacebuilding Architecture review and the Common African Position on this matter are commendable steps, which reflect both

global and continental political will and leadership. However, the international and continental communities must seize the current momentum to translate such frameworks into effective operations, while enhancing synergies and interlinkages between them, including, most notably, between the UN's Sustaining Peace Agenda, the AU Silencing the Guns Roadmap and the AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy. In recent years, the AU has engaged in a revitalization process of its PCRD engagements, within a crowded peacebuilding environment and with various actors involved. This includes an innovative deployment in the Gambia[53] and the establishment of the AU Center for PCRD in Cairo. These efforts provide an opportunity for strengthening African ownership and resilience.

B. Addressing Overlapping Crises: Anchoring COVID-19 and Climate Responses in Resilience

Over the past decade, the climate, security and development nexus has become more visible across the African continent. In Somalia, droughts are main drivers for herder-farmer conflicts due to increasing competition over diminishing resources.[54] Likewise, in Nigeria, Boko Haram plays an increasing role in fueling tensions between pastoralists.[55]

This intersection between climate, COVID-19 and security dynamics is strongly manifested across the Horn of Africa and Sahel regions, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin, where a concurrence of droughts and flash floods are coinciding with the pandemic and its socio-economic implications, in addition to the menace of terrorism, transnational organized crime and other security threats. These factors combined are exacerbating structural vulnerabilities, reducing the coping capacity of affected communities, and aggravating pressure on governments' response capacity.[56]

The interplay between climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic exerts additional stress on resource-based livelihoods, intensifying competition over natural resources and aggravating the risk of violence. The containment measures to curb the pandemic are causing disruptions to resource-based livelihoods and climate-sensitive economic sectors, which have already been subject to recurrent changes due to climate unpredictability and variability over the past decades.

For instance, pastoralism, which is practiced by around 268 million people across the continent,[57] has experienced a series of constraints, primarily due to restrictive mobility and market access. Lockdowns have restricted pastoralists from reaching markets, tending their livestock after curfew times and moving to near villages to seek fodder. In East Africa, the closure of local and artisan markets as well as the official ban of informal trade have deprived pastoralists from high-value opportunities for live animal trade.[58] These worsening livelihood conditions and diminishing opportunities could aggravate the risk of competition and conflict over natural resources, food insecurity and food price spikes,[59] while inducing displacement and augmenting humanitarian needs.

On the response side, the COVID-19 pandemic has overburdened and stretched the response capacity of governments and international actors, while diverting attention away from climate-related priorities, primarily on the adaptation and resilience fronts.[60] Across East Africa, countries have been hit by consecutive rounds of locust invasions, causing serious

damage to the agriculture sector and jeopardizing the livelihoods of millions of people across the region.[61] In many of these countries, agriculture accounts for 30-40 percent of GDP and employs up to 80 percent of the population.[62]

In the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak, international organizations successfully collected the requisite funding to help governments fight the locust outbreak; however, travel restrictions reduced the number of cargo flights and caused delays in obtaining pesticides and other vital supplies, setting back efforts to promptly suppress locust from travelling and eating up crops and vegetation along the journey.[63] In Somalia, locust infestations led to the loss of approximately 20 percent of national crop yields in 2020 alone.[64]

The COVID-19 crisis is also making governments to recalibrate their expenditure priorities, injecting finance into health and socio-economic responses to the pandemic, and thus increasing the climate finance deficit. In many South African countries, public expenditure has been diverted away from essential water infrastructure for climate adaptation towards public health services.[65]

The weakened capacity to deal with the immediate needs emerging from the climate crisis and the global pandemic, as well as invest in addressing systemic weaknesses and long-term prevention, increases the likelihood of transforming threats into multi-faceted risks. Security risks include hyper-competition over scarce natural resources, inter-communal tensions, weakened coping alternatives, displacement, increased humanitarian demands and the erosion of social cohesion, among others.

C. From Gender Gaps Towards Inclusive and Effective Responses

The outbreak and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with the 20th anniversary of the landmark UNSCR 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The pandemic has accentuated the need for dealing with women issues in conflict and crisis situations across the WPS agenda.[66] The pandemic also highlighted the differentiated and compounded impact of crises on women and girls, while emphasizing the need for adequate measures to be put in place to protect women. It also shed light on the positive role of women peacebuilders in responding to crises, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

The pandemic has had a disproportionate socio-economic impact on women and girls. Women have been subject to layoffs and abrupt loss of livelihoods, given that 74 percent of women in Africa are engaged in the informal sector[67] – the economic sector that was hit the hardest by the pandemic. Likewise, women are largely overrepresented in the service, tourism and hospitality industries, all of which have witnessed serious disruptions and are characterized with labor precariousness.[68]

Furthermore, since the outbreak of the pandemic, GBV–termed the "shadow pandemic"–has been on the rise. Some countries have witnessed a surge of reported GBV cases up to five-fold, while in others there has been a decrease as women are being sheltered with their perpetrators as a result of the lockdown, making it difficult to seek help through regular channels.[69] Numbers in countries like Liberia reached a 50 percent spike in the first half of 2020, with more than 600 GBV cases.[70]

Additionally, data shows that despite their higher exposure to COVID-19, women continue to have limited access to testing

and healthcare facilities–compared to their male counterparts.[71] The pandemic also exacerbated weaknesses in maternal health services. In Nigeria, over 97,000 women gave birth without health facilities and the number of maternal deaths in health care facilities doubled in August 2020–in comparison to August 2019.[72]

In response, several African countries have devised gender-responsive interventions to address the adverse impact of the pandemic on women and girls. For instance, Egypt was the first country–in Africa and the MENA region–to issue a policy paper that maps the specific implications of the pandemic on women, while recommending policy interventions and developing a "Women Policy Tracker" to monitor their implementation progress.[73]

On the economic front, some countries put forward economic recovery measures that address the specific economic vulnerabilities of women, boosting their production opportunities and supporting women-led small and medium enterprises. In Togo, the government devised a digital cash transfer scheme–Novissi--to provide support to households and families, particularly those who were dependent on informal work and have been hit the hardest

by the pandemic.[74] On the continental level, the AU Women, Gender and Development Directorate issued guidelines for AU Member States and relevant stakeholders on gender-responsive interventions to combat COVID-19.[75]

Across Africa, women peacebuilders have shown innovation and resourcefulness in response to the pandemic and its associated 'new normal'. Women peacebuilders provided information on healthcare, humanitarian aid, and social services for their communities.[76] For instance, in Senegal, female community leaders used social media platforms to circulate prevention messages about the virus and provide health information for women in rural areas.[77] Likewise, women have played an important role as mediators between the government and local communities. Women peacebuilders were key informants of the needs of local communities, especially those who are most vulnerable, such as refugees and displaced persons.[78] Furthermore, women have resorted to digital technology and social media to participate in mediation efforts and peace processes, overcoming the challenge of conducting physical meetings.

D. Terrorism in the Shadow of the Pandemic: How COVID-19 is Changing the Terrorism Landscape in Africa

The African continent continues to grapple with the menace of terrorism and its associated threats, including killings, kidnapping, illicit flow of weapons, increased criminal activity and transnational organized crime. According to the 2020 Global Terrorism Index, seven of the ten countries with the largest increase in terrorism and deaths associated with terrorism are in SSA.[79]

The confluence of the COVID-19 pandemic and terrorism has brought complex and multi-faceted consequences. By claiming

lives and destroying livelihoods, the pandemic is exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities and grievances–thus providing fertile grounds for militant groups to exploit vulnerabilities and perceived exclusion to gain support and legitimacy.[80] This is further compounded by diversion of government resources to combat the pandemic and enforce lockdowns and curfews. Restricted mobility, paired with a global increase in internet usage of 50-70 percent, has encouraged more people to move to digital platforms, inadvertently

heightening the risk of online recruitment whereby terrorist groups are presented with an online captive audience.[81]

Furthermore, and due to constricted government resources to deliver basic goods and services to some areas, terrorist groups stand to potentially gain massive political capital by filling this vacuum and providing aid to affected communities. As terrorist organizations seek to present themselves as more efficient alternatives to governments, this creates serious challenges, particularly in border zone communities where state presence is limited or weak, and where terrorist groups have begun to assume the role of aid providers or curfew enforcers.[82]

While it is still too early to discern the long-term impact of COVID-19 on terrorism trends across Africa, initial data suggests that many terrorist groups view the pandemic as an opportunity to regain or enhance pre-pandemic operational momentum. Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Province have carried out attacks unabated against civilian, humanitarian and military targets, resulting in more than 300 civilian casualties in 2020 alone.[83] Likewise, Al-Shabaab has continued to launch attacks in Somalia and northern Kenya labeling COVID-19 as "an export to Somalia by crusader forces"[84] and blaming the pandemic on the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).[85] Equally troubling, in Mali, the fatalities in the first seven months of 2020 were greater than the total fatalities of the entire year of 2019.[86]

On the response side, these developments are taking place at a time of changing geopolitical and security dynamics. Some actors are reconsidering their contributions to global and regional multinational armed forces involved in counterterrorism operations, posing a challenge to multilateralism, already exacerbated by the pandemic.[87] AMISOM is planning a drawdown of troops in preparation for its eventual complete withdrawal. Additionally, and due to the proliferation of COVID-19 amongst military ranks, some states considered the reduction of troops involved in counterterrorism operations.[88]

In contrast, other key regional actors have stepped up their counterterrorism efforts to respond to the rising threat of terrorism. Regional actors including the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram and the G5 Sahel continue to play a critical role in addressing the terrorism challenge.[89] G5 Sahel states convened for the G5 Summit in N'Djamena, Chad in February 2021, where the deployment of additional troops, specifically to the Liptako Gourma tri-border area between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso was pledged—as part of the G5 Sahel group's fight against the surge of terrorism in the region.[90]

Despite regional disparities in counterterrorism efforts during COVID-19, One projected outcome is that the global economic impact of the pandemic is likely to have an adverse effect on international funding for counterterrorism efforts, particularly in Africa. Counterterrorism budgets and international assistance for counterterrorism operations are likely to be constricted due to government budget deficits and shifting resources towards responding to domestic needs as a result of the pandemic. This will pose serious implications for national, regional and international counterterrorism efforts.

E. Lockdown and Exclusion: A Critical Juncture for Africa's Forcibly Displaced

The spread of the pandemic has coincided with another mounting global crisis—forced displacement,[91] which reached a record high of 80 million people by mid-2020.[92]

The convergence of these crises has laid bare pre-existing vulnerabilities and accentuated them for individuals who were already at-risk before the pandemic hit, most notably people on the move.[93] This is particularly the case in Africa, where the health and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 hit Africa's forcibly displaced population of 27 million the hardest.[94]

The limited inclusion of forcibly displaced populations (FDPs) in COVID-19 national response measures, development planning, and peace processes has grave repercussions. Not only does it hamper efforts to uphold the rights of FDPs and mitigate the pandemic's disproportionate impact on them, but it also impedes leveraging FDPs potential contributions to efforts aimed at long-term recovery and sustainable peace and development in Africa.

Despite the UNSG's call for a global ceasefire, armed conflicts and terrorist activities increased displacement in Africa by 4 million people in 2020.[95] The lack of an inclusive COVID-19 response–in certain cases–has limited the ability of asylum seekers to seek cross-border protection[96] and restricted the potential return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees.[97]

Furthermore, delivery of lifesaving humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable FDPs has been constrained as a result of recalibration of funding and resources and the lack of accessibility.[98] In Uganda, for example, South-Sudanese refugee settlements witnessed a 30 percent reduction in aid by April 2020, despite the soaring demand for humanitarian assistance.[99]

This is particularly concerning in situations of fragility and ongoing conflict. Armed conflict and violence have impeded government and humanitarian actors' access to territories, hampering their ability to effectively implement disease control and prevention measures.[100] FDP vulnerabilities are compounded in fragile host communities with weak healthcare systems and limited resources and capacities.

The limited integration of FDPs in COVID-19 socio-economic response measures further accentuates the economic impact of the pandemic, including loss of income, exponential rise of food prices, loss of remittances, and spur in unemployment rates, resulting in a noticeable deterioration in livelihoods, increased poverty rates and food insecurity.[101] Furthermore, FDPs are more likely to contract COVID-19 as they often reside in overcrowded and precarious accommodations that lack access to adequate health services,[102] safe hygiene and sanitation facilities,[103] and inclusive information on the virus.

Moreover, the closure of schools and universities in the wake of the pandemic has curtailed FDPs' access to education, which has adverse short- and long-term impacts, including exposing forcibly displaced children to the increased risk of abuse, exploitation, violence, and inadequate nutrition as well as deepening social inequality on the long-run.[104]

The pandemic has also exposed FDPs to heightened protection and security risks. This includes increased exploitation and abuse, forced evictions, GBV, human trafficking and smuggling,[105] in addition to the spread of discrimination, stigmatization, and xenophobic attitudes against them.[106] These factors, along with competition over scarce resources, may in turn pose grave ramifications for the broader security landscape in Africa–aggravating the risk of intercommunal distrust, escalation of violence, and deepening inequality.

On the response side, international and regional organizations, such as UNHCR, WHO and the AU have extended support

to governments, including in Rwanda, Angola, Burundi, Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tanzania to ensure the effective integration of forcibly displaced communities into national COVID-19 responses, which include the development of comprehensive infection preparedness, prevention and control measures[107] and immediate and long-term socio-economic response and recovery plans[108]. While some African countries have taken concrete steps towards including forcibly displaced communities in their national COVID-19 responses, they continue to fall short of meeting the heightened need.[109] This is largely due to the lack of financial resources and institutional capacities–which underscores the importance of the principle and practice of burden and responsibility sharing.

F. Peace Operations in the Face of the Pandemic: Balancing Between Competing Priorities

The pandemic and its repercussions have exerted pressure on UN and AU peace operations as they are faced with the challenge of balancing between competing priorities. On one hand, they have to deliver on their mandates and respond to the cascading risks and challenges associated with the pandemic, including the soaring protection needs and vulnerabilities of local populations, while on the other hand, they have to continue supporting pre-pandemic reform efforts.[110] In light of this, AU operations had to reconfigure their budgetary priorities to meet emerging needs. For instance, the limited fund dedicated for peacebuilding programs has been recalibrated towards supporting national and local mitigation efforts.[111]

Moreover, to contain the spread of the pandemic amongst its ranks, the UN took stringent measures, including the suspension of all rotations, repatriations, and new deployments of uniformed personnel during the period between April-June 2020.[112] On its side, the AU embarked on similar measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on peace support operations. For instance, AMISOM developed a standard operating procedure (SOP) in line with guidance from Africa CDC, WHO and the federal government.[113] AMISOM also established a COVID-19 Joint Taskforce to harmonize and coordinate the activities of different stakeholders in response to the pandemic. Additionally, Africa CDC donated medical materials to mandated and authorized AU missions.

The pandemic has also significantly disrupted peacekeeper activities. Activities that require close contact with local populations have been suspended, while those deemed most critical have been prioritized; namely patrols, activities related to the protection of civilians, force protection, convoy escorts, protection of key infrastructure, and support to host states and conflict-affected communities.[114] On their side, troop- and police-contributing countries faced logistical and financial constraints due to delays in the reimbursements of their contingents.[115]

In response, peacekeeping missions have adapted their *modus operandi* to cope with the pandemic and its associated impacts. They primarily shifted their focus towards protecting communities,[116] particularly the most vulnerable and mission staff, while supporting the containment and mitigation efforts of host governments. Across missions, UN Police have been assisting national police services in implementing mitigation measures and sustaining their operations while adhering to the precautionary measures.[117]

Furthermore, peacekeeping operations have been providing support to regional

and continental organizations to continue implementing their mandates. For example, MINUSMA utilizes its good offices to support ECOWAS's mediation efforts in Mali, particularly the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation[118]. In Darfur, the United Nations–African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) facilitated the peace negotiations by conducting virtual meetings–a process that culminated in the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement in October 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reiterated the importance and relevance of peace operations in response to crises and accentuated the imperative to advance pre-pandemic reform efforts. In light of this, the AU adopted the new doctrine on peace support operations, providing strategic guidance for the planning, conduct, management and liquidation of AU Peace Support Operations.[119] Furthermore, the "Cairo Roadmap on Enhancing the Performance of Peacekeeping Operations: From Mandate to Exit", which was adopted as an African Common Position by the AU Peace and Security Council in October 2020, integrated a component on enhancing the preparedness of peace operations in response to emerging challenges, including health and environmental crises. The pandemic has also emphasized the importance of leveraging collective efforts across peacekeeping stakeholders to strengthen and synergize response capacity, particularly within the framework of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

Shaping the Pathways to Sustainable, Resilient and Inclusive Recovery - The Way Forward

The COVID-19 pandemic further reinforces the need to accelerate the paradigm shift from crisis management towards prevention and resilience-building, as emphasized by the 2019 Aswan Conclusions for Sustainable Peace and Development.

COVID-19 has brought forward the need for reconfiguring traditional response mechanisms to better prevent, mitigate and withstand future shocks and disruptions, be it traditional security threats or unconventional risks. Investing in resilience-building across all governance levels is

crucial, to enable better adaptation in the face of systemic risks and shocks. Instead of relying on crisis management, COVID-19 has showed countries the importance of coordinating systems and addressing risks from a holistic and preventative lens across the humanitarian-peace-development nexus -- emphasizing the need to recover stronger while 'rebuilding better' driven by a long-term vision.

While the COVID-19 pandemic may have hindered development efforts, it has not abated the continent's aspirations for growth and prosperity. Prior to the pandemic, African economies enjoyed some of the highest growth rates in the world.[120] Today, the pandemic is pushing Africa into its first recession in 25 years.[121] Recognizing the pandemic's impact on African States, current approaches do not sufficiently mirror the gravity of its implications. Responses to security and developmental challenges remain reactive, do not account for bridging silos, and fall short of harnessing the potential of Africa's overlooked assets and resources. As health systems recalibrate their resources to respond to the pandemic, other health issues are being sidelined. At the same time, as African governments grapple with the economic toll of the pandemic, those who were already on the margins are being pushed further behind. Armed conflict and terrorism, exacerbated by climate shocks,

have left people without access to humanitarian assistance, basic services and a functioning healthcare system to help protect them from the pandemic.

Mindful of the complexity, interconnectivity and concurrence of today's systemic risks and aggravated vulnerabilities, this section highlights the opportunity that COVID-19 has presented to reconfigure traditional ways of working to address these threats and underlying drivers. Presenting recovery pathways to African governments and stakeholders, this section provides a holistic guiding framework to operationalize the paradigm shift from crisis management to prevention and resilience-building by means of addressing governance challenges, shifting from conflict resolution to structural prevention, fostering a whole-of-society approach, leveraging existing resources and coordinating responses between humanitarian, development, and peace actors as well as scaling up innovative finance.

This section also sheds light on suggested interventions to ensure that these pathways lead to a more resilient, equitable and inclusive Africa, while drawing on perspectives and examples from international, regional and national responses to address systemic risks in an integrated manner. Each proposed pathway-forward is anchored in concise, clear, and actionable policy recommendations that will act as a prelude to the Aswan Conclusions II for Sustainable Peace and Development.

A. Addressing the Governance Challenge: Strengthening National Ownership and Fostering Resilient Institutions

The COVID-19 pandemic is a multi-faceted threat, but first and foremost, it is a governance challenge. Despite being primarily a health crisis, the pandemic has laid bare and further exacerbated governance gaps across the different African sectors, ranging from economy and social security, to markets, trade, climate adaptation and others.[122] The economic downturn caused by the pandemic has further constricted African governments' capacities and resources to effectively respond to the crisis, including providing adequate support to the most vulnerable populations.[123]

Laying the foundations for a sustainable recovery necessitates that African governments and their partners first invest in building and strengthening resilient and viable institutions and capacities in line with the notion of national ownership. This would address both immediate needs imposed by systemic shocks such as the pandemic, and long-standing structural vulnerabilities.

While a whole-of-government approach is at the heart of addressing governance challenges, a people-centered approach is equally important to effectively strengthen the social contract and bolster social cohesion between communities. Such an environment would also unlock the active engagement of all segments of society in pandemic mitigation and recovery efforts.

The role played by local actors as the first line of defense to the pandemic has proven to be invaluable, particularly in border areas and settings with limited or weak state presence.[124] This reaffirms the need for investing in the localization of development by African governments, supported by external partners. To that end, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 together provide a blueprint to guide such processes.

In line with the above, African governments should provide local authorities—across all sectors—with the necessary financial and technical resources and mandates to effectively deliver on peace and development responsibilities. An example is the Kenya Vision 2030, which centers on economic, social and political pillars that integrate sustainable development, and is localized to the county-level and mainstreamed into national development processes.[125] Additionally, in line with its national counterterrorism strategy, the government rolled out county action plans in all 47 counties, harmonizing by these measures national and local mandates, as well as capacities and responses.[126]

To that end, multi-stakeholder partnerships in support of governance priorities set out by African governments are indispensable. They are to be guided by context-specific strategies and action plans whereby humanitarian, development and peace actors align and synergize their engagements.[127]

B. Operationalizing Structural Prevention: Embedding the Enablers for Peace

Africa's current peace, security and development landscape underscores the necessity of realizing the paradigm shift from conflict management to prevention, on a structural level. Structural prevention entails identifying and addressing systemic weaknesses which often evolve overtime, with the potential to cause violent conflicts if they remain unaddressed.[128] Conflict prevention is not only cost-effective but has also proven to work, as championed in the landmark UN-World Bank Pathways for Peace Study (2018). Despite the presence of several international and continental normative frameworks on prevention, including most notably the sustaining peace agenda, Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063, Silencing the Guns Roadmap and the Continental Structural Conflict Prevention

Framework, operationalization gaps persist; especially, with regards to when to invest in prevention, what to invest in and whom to partner with.

Conflict prevention is a sovereign responsibility and a sovereignty enhancer. African states must put in place national mechanisms for assessing systemic vulnerabilities, structural grievances and pockets of fragility, as well as pillars of resilience. States should make use of technical resources of external partners to not only support assessments, but also to build up national capacities in this domain.

Guided by such assessments, African states should mainstream prevention in national planning processes (including budgeting and monitoring and evaluation) across all sectors. For instance, basic service provision is to be delivered based on a thorough understanding of the perceptions of concerned populations which are intricate in nature and often formed based on long-standing historical grievances.[129]

Conflict prevention requires a whole-of-government approach which ensures complementarity and coherence of concerted efforts of various national actors. Ghana provides an example of the benefit of having a lead agency–the National Peace Council–in place to harmonize and coordinate preventative peace and development efforts on all levels. Additionally, it underlines the importance of political will and buy-in. To date, Ghana remains the only AU member state to have utilized the Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework.

Similarly, on the continental level, the AU should adopt a holistic approach to structural prevention efforts. Its various

architectures and bodies, most notably the African Governance Architecture, African Peace and Security Architecture and AU Development Agency, should leverage on respective mandates and resources across the peace-development continuum, in order to ensure that efforts converge in a synergistic manner. To that end, the Interdepartmental Task Force for Conflict Prevention should be further utilized.

While economic growth is an important pillar of structural prevention, alone it is insufficient to prevent conflict and sustain peace and development. Development interventions by the government and its partners should advance developmental goals, while addressing inequalities and marginalization. One such example is quality infrastructure projects that maximize the positive impacts on the economy[130]. Such projects create employment opportunities for populations in periphery areas and/or those at risk of falling into extreme poverty.

In order to link early warning indicators with timely and effective preventative action, there is a dire need for a shift in the funding culture. To date, money follows violence, in the sense that when the level of violence increases, so does the amount of money targeting the risks of further escalation. Up until such escalation, development efforts only address the symptoms of conflict. As such, sustainable, flexible and catalytic funding windows to address root drivers of conflict must be made available. To that end, the World Bank's new Prevention and Resilience Allocation, under the Fragility, Conflict and Violence envelope[131] (total of USD 25 billion in IDA19), applies the insights from the UN-World Bank Pathways for Peace report to scale up inclusive and preventive approaches in countries at risk of falling into high-intensity conflict or large-scale violence.

C. The Centrality of Inclusion for Sustainable Peace and Development: Towards a Whole-of-Society Approach

The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder that people and local communities are at the crossroads of every crisis; be it a terrorist attack, an armed conflict or the fallout effects of a global pandemic. As such, including people in all efforts exerted by humanitarian-development-peace actors is imperative, and has been widely recognized across international and continental normative frameworks. This includes, most notably, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as the "plan of action for (the) people", the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism,[132] the Decade of Action,[133] the sustaining peace agenda,[134] and most recently the 2020 review of the Peacebuilding Architecture.[135] On the continental level, the Agenda 2063 and the AU PCRD Policy[136] also aim to unleash the potential of conflict-affected populations.

Inclusivity as a guiding principle for all interventions is defined by the UN as "the extent and manner in which the views and needs of parties to conflict and other stakeholders are represented, heard and integrated into a peace process."[137] Inclusion thus goes beyond a mere seat at the negotiation table. To translate aforementioned frameworks into action on the ground, humanitarian, development, and peace actors should adopt a whole-of-society approach. Such an approach requires inclusivity to be mainstreamed across all phases of any intervention. Starting from the designing process and defining the means of implementation to measuring the impact and monitoring the progress, interventions should be

participatory, inclusive, coordinated and responsive to the needs of concerned populations.[138]

On the part of African governments, effectively responding to systemic risks and crises requires investing in inclusive strategies, policies and decision-making. This endeavor must not be dealt with as a box-checking exercise, but instead as a means to foster meaningful community engagement and unlock the potential of all segments of society. For instance, the intersection between gender and governance, especially in light of the gendered impact of the pandemic, requires steady attention. Integrating a gender-sensitive lens for disaster preparedness and response to pandemics and other external shocks is paramount.

In particular, women and youth have provided invaluable contributions to the effective response to the pandemic. In fact, the pandemic has highlighted the imperative that African states should advance the implementation of the WPS agenda, the Youth, Peace and Security agenda and relevant frameworks (UNSCRs 1325 and 2550).[139] The Global Partnership for Education initiative led by the AU in partnership with other African Member States is testament to the innovative ability of youth during crises through its COVID-19 response plan. Another good example is the African Women Leaders Network, a platform that emerged from the long-standing UN-AU partnership. The platform plays a substantial role in developing policies, strategies and guidelines for gender responsive actions to combat COVID-19 and in post COVID-19 recovery.[140]

The pandemic has reinforced the importance of new modalities of youth inclusion in the labor market, including most notably through supporting entrepreneurship. Financial institutions and the private sector can help further instigate this much-needed change. Anchored in the expansion of economic opportunity for both male and female African youth, AfDB's initiative "Jobs for Youth in Africa Strategy 2016- 2025" provides a concrete step in this direction.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, technology has proved to be an indispensable tool for sustaining peace processes and economic empowerment of women and youth. As such international development actors alongside the private sector must invest in sustainable energy and technology, widen access and integrate digital literacy into women and youth programming to bring their voices to the fore in the political and economic sphere. African youth showed exemplary efforts in innovation and launching initiatives in that sense. For example, the AU "Sauti" platform for young African women allows them to showcase their efforts in addressing COVID-19, exhibiting their masterpieces and strengthening African linguistic diversity.[141]

In line with the above, predictable and sustained funding, and a shift from donor-oriented programmatic engagement to merit-based funding is essential. Design and implementation of projects should shift from the hands of the entity that mobilizes the necessary resources to the entity which has the comparative advantage in implementation on the ground. This would, for example, enable a targeted focus on enhancing the local capacities of marginalized and vulnerable populations, including women, youth and FDPs; hence, strengthening the social contract, enhancing early detection of fragilities, reducing community violence, and ultimately contributing to the effectiveness and sustainability of the results.[142]

D. Harnessing Engines for Sustainable Peace and Development: Trade, Infrastructure and Sustainable Energy

While trade, infrastructure and energy are engines for sustainable peace and development, there is ample potential for enhancing their role in the advancement thereof. The COVID-19 experience accentuated, more acutely than ever, the imperative of investing in key economic sectors to strengthen the resilience of governments and societies against systemic risks and their security repercussions. These sectors are prime enablers for service provision, including the delivery of education, healthcare, water and sanitation services.

The reliable access to services is one of the direct ways in which citizens encounter the state and shape their perception of it.[143] Accordingly, inclusive economic growth does not only bolster the resilience of societies, but it also solidifies social trust and government legitimacy–both are key ingredients for building positive peace and sustainable development.[144]

Trade, infrastructure and energy are also accelerators of economic growth and job creation, contributing to closing Africa's persistent employment gap, while allowing African businesses to transform market needs into opportunities for entrepreneurship.[145] For instance, AfCFTA could augment regional income by 7 percent (USD 450 billion), expedite wage growth for women and lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty by 2030–if implemented fully.

However, attracting investments into these vital economic sectors is contingent first and foremost on the removal of structural barriers. The operationalization of AfCFTA, which holds the promise of accelerating intra-regional trade and elevating the value of African exports towards final goods, requires the reduction of non-tariff barriers

and the adoption of trade facilitation measures.

Furthermore, the pandemic has highlighted the pivotal contribution of the private sector as an integral partner for sustaining peace and development. National policymakers should devise policies and regulations to de-risk the investment environment and attract private sector participation to deliver critical projects and services in the infrastructure and sustainable energy sectors. For example, AfDB's Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa provides concessional finance instruments to eliminate market barriers and enhance the risk-return profile for individual investments.[146] Likewise, the AfDB's Private Sector Credit Enhancement Facility, the Partial Risk Guarantees (PRG) and Partial Credit Guarantees (PCDG) are successful examples of investment mechanisms that advance the creation of an enabling and safe business environment, and also provide financial guarantees.

Furthermore, pivoting towards infrastructure for enhancing both national connectivity and regional integration necessitates the advancement of innovative finance, including through public-private partnerships. The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), which comprises 51 programs and projects covering transport, energy, information and communication technology, has established a continental business network to crowd in financing and support infrastructure projects by creating a collaborative platform between private and public sectors.

In light of this, the removal of structural barriers and the advancement of innovative finance, primarily through the engagement of the private sector, are key areas for

reform to intensify investment in critical economic sectors, enhancing the lives and livelihoods of millions across the continent and mitigating the risk of violence, social mistrust and other security threats.[147] In Kenya, private sector firms are playing an increasing role in bringing sustainable energy solutions to rural communities, particularly through solar power mini grids.[148] These programs also improve access to and quality of education and health care services; strengthen livelihoods and economic empowerment; and support the development of micro and small scale enterprises—all of which contribute to mitigating the security risks associated with unemployment, social exclusion and inequality, and buttress peacebuilding efforts.

E. Operationalizing the Nexus Approach: Working Together in the Face of the Global Pandemic and Other Systemic Risks

The COVID-19 pandemic has further crystalized the inextricable link between humanitarian affairs, development, and peace in Africa, as highlighted in the Aswan Conclusions of the first edition of the Aswan Forum. This requires applying a nexus angle when addressing structural weaknesses and systemic risks across the continent. While progress has been made on the strategic level, the nexus approach has not been well-incorporated on the operational level. A case in point is the COVID-19 response.[149]

Notwithstanding the still-evolving understanding of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, this policy concept offers stakeholders a systems' approach to "meeting life-saving needs at the same time as ensuring longer-term investment addressing the systemic causes of conflict and vulnerability."[150]

While multiple modes of operationalization exist, there is no one-size-fits-all nexus model. Humanitarian, peace and development actors must be cognizant of how to tailor a nexus approach that best fits each national context and its peculiarities. Reflecting a wide range of working modalities from 'distinct but complementary' to 'merged but principled,' stakeholders should mold the nexus approach in accordance with the humanitarian, developmental and political landscape in which they operate.[151]

Nexus elements may also be embedded within an organization's programming and responses. A good example of this is the World Food Programme's Food Assistance for Assets Initiative.[152] Establishing new irrigation techniques in a small village in Burkina Faso, the World Food Programme managed to put degraded land back into productive use, strengthened the resilience of local communities through sustainable livelihoods, reduced the dependence on hand-out aid, and decreased the risk of communal tensions over land. As such, nexus programming provides a useful tool to achieve multiple objectives across the sustainable peace and development agendas, thus bringing about a cascade of benefits.

In tandem, African governments lie at the center of operationalizing the nexus approach. As such, they must ensure that this approach is deployed where relevant in a protection-sensitive manner. Accordingly, this entails safeguarding humanitarian principles and protection spaces, and supporting local authorities through coordination mechanisms that are responsive to vulnerable communities' needs at the local level.[153] The rolling-out of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in African States provides a

good example of the implementation of the nexus approach to better integrate FDPs in national development planning.[154]

To make the nexus work for African countries moving in and out of crises, humanitarian, development and peace actors, including the AU, RECs/RMs and national actors, must engage in both sequential and simultaneous programming. This includes investing in peace dividends alongside humanitarian assistance, and integrating resilience and peace lenses in programming.[155] As such, resolving forced displacement in Africa could only be achieved through operationalizing APSA's conflict prevention and peacebuilding tool boxes (early warning and action) in coordination with AU bodies involved in humanitarian assistance and migrant protection to address structural drivers of systemic risks. This will help create the right PCRD environment–a critical component to facilitate sustainable return, the preferred durable solution to forced displacement.

Altering traditional funding mechanisms is also necessary to strengthen coherence, collaboration, and complementarity between the responses of humanitarian, peace and development actors. Traditional funding mechanisms often reflect a clear demarcation between the humanitarian,

peace, and development funding by donors, which in turn result in siloed funding streams.[156] However, developing flexible and predictable multi-year financing modalities, which are geared towards achieving collective outcomes in a sustainable manner while also adapting to context-specific changing risk levels and needs, can incentivize synergies across the triple nexus. Multi-donor trust funds and pooled funds at the global and country levels are potential pathways for better financing for nexus interventions.[157]

In sum, setting collective outcomes through joint approaches and frameworks–while embracing the complexity in collective planning, designing and implementation of programs and projects–is crucial not only to effectively meet immediate emergency needs, but also to ensure investments in longer-term sustainable peace and development. [158] Such investments are key to proactively addressing the main drivers of armed conflict and vulnerability, building resilience to new and recurrent shocks and stresses, as well as preventing the relapse into violent armed conflict.

F. Scaling Up Financing for Sustainable Peace and Development

The magnitude of the complex, multi-dimensional, interlinked, and evolving drivers of fragility reiterate the imperative of strengthened partnerships and tailored, flexible and high-impact financing, including innovative financing, for peacebuilding. The African Development Bank's Transition Support Facility (TSF) and Somalia Infrastructure Fund (SIF) are good examples of financial mechanisms, which

facilitate the pooling of resources of partners for larger-scale impact on the ground. These mechanisms benefit particularly the poorest and most vulnerable communities. Creating these enabling conditions reduce vulnerabilities, strengthen capacities and foster resilience to fully harness the tremendous potentials and opportunities of the African continent.

***

Endnotes

[1] "Aswan Forum :: Aswan Conclusions." Accessed February 27, 2021. https://www.af1-2019.aswanforum.org/aswan-conclusions.

[2] "The Arab Region Post-COVID and Conflicts: Investing in Human Capital, Resilience and Sustainability," cairo peacekeeping, accessed February 25, 2021,

[3] AfricaNews, "COVID-19 Second Wave Sees a Higher Death Rate in Africa," Africanews, February 4, 2021,

[4] "Coronavirus in Africa: Five Reasons Why Covid-19 Has Been Less Deadly than Elsewhere," *BBC News*, October 7, 2020, sec. Africa,

[5] "Coronavirus in Africa: Five Reasons Why Covid-19 Has Been Less Deadly than Elsewhere," *BBC News*, October 7, 2020, sec. Africa, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54418613

[6] "Africa COVID-19 Cases Top 3 Million, First Wave Peak Surpassed," WHO | Regional Office for Africa, accessed February 25, 2021,

[7] Systemic and structural weaknesses/vulnerabilities are used interchangeably.

[8] "Communique of 975th Meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council on Peace, Security and Development: Taking Security Challenges into Account in Financing Development, 27 January 2021 - World," ReliefWeb, accessed February 17, 2021,

[9] "Chair's Summary - Terrorism in the Shadow of the Pandemic," cairopeacekeeping, accessed February 1, 2021,

[10] William Hynes et al., "Bouncing Forward: A Resilience Approach to Dealing with COVID-19 and Future Systemic Shocks," *Environment Systems and Decisions* 40, no. 2 (June 1, 2020): 174–84,

[11] Systemic challenge and systemic risk are used interchangeably.

[12] "COVID-19 in Africa: Protecting Lives and Economies," April 2020, .

[13] These measures include curfews, social distancing and restrictive mobility.

[14] Okou Cedric and Rudi Steinbach, "Sub-Saharan Africa" (World Bank, 2021),

[15] "Africa: Tourism Jobs Lost from COVID-19 2020," Statista, accessed January 31, 2021, .

[16] "The Impact of the COVID-19 on the Informal Economy in Africa and the Related Policy Responses" (International Labour Organization, April 2020),

[17] "External Debt Complicates Africa's COVID-19 Recovery, Debt Relief Needed," Africa Renewal, July 30, 2020,

[18] Nchimunya Ndiili, "Unprecedented Economic Attack on sub-Sahara African Economies: Coronavirus," *Environment Systems and Decisions* 40, no. 2 (June 1, 2020): 244–51, .

[19] "Updated Estimates of the Impact of COVID-19 on Global Poverty: Looking Back at 2020 and the Outlook for 2021," accessed January 31, 2021, .

[20] "Coronavirus Shocks to Human Development and Sustaining Peace | SIPRI."

[21] "Pandemics and the Challenges of Sustaining Peace," accessed January 27, 2021, .

[22] "Africa | Global Focus," accessed February 25, 2021, https://reporting.unhcr.org/africa.

[23] "Africa Report on Internal Displacement, 2019," IDMC, accessed February 25, 2021, https://www.internal-displacement.org/africa-report.

[24] "UN Secretary-General's Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women | Digital Library: Publications," UN Women, accessed February 1, 2021, .

[25] The shadow pandemic refers to the growing records of gender-based violence since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to UN Women, since the outbreak of COVID-19, emerging data and reports from those on the front lines, have shown that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, has intensified.

[26] Judy Dlamini, "Gender-Based Violence, Twin Pandemic to COVID-19," *Critical Sociology*, November 30, 2020, 0896920520975465, .

[27] "In the digital age, being gender-blind is not an option," accessed February 3, 2021, .

[28] Hynes et al., "Bouncing Forward."

[29] "Covid-19 and conflict forced over 12 million children from school across Africa's Central Sahel Region - Burkina Faso," ReliefWeb, accessed January 31, 2021, .

[30] "Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict," n.d., 337.

[31] "Foresight Africa 2021," *Brookings* (blog), January 21, 2021, .

[32] Reuters Staff, "African Union Appoints Ex-Credit Suisse Boss as Envoy for Virus Support," *Reuters*, April 12, 2020,

[33] "AU Guidelines on Gender Responsive Responses to COVID-19 | African Union," accessed February 3, 2021, .

[34] "Regional Coordination against COVID-19: What Role for the RECs? - World," ReliefWeb, accessed February 4, 2021, .

[35] "Africa CDC Partners with the UNDP to Strengthen Africa's Response to COVID-19," *Africa CDC* (blog), accessed February 3, 2021,.

[36] "Africa Medical Supplies Platform | We Help the Frontline Source Critical Equipment, Fast.," accessed February 3, 2021, .

[37] "Insights From Africa's Covid-19 Response," Institute for Global Change, accessed January 17, 2021,.

[38] "Africa's Governance Response to COVID-19 | African Union," accessed February 3, 2021,.

[39] Responses fall under the categories: legal and institutional mechanisms, disease prevention and containment measures, social and humanitarian measures, and fiscal and monetary measures. Most African countries applied a variation of all four categories, with a few instilling less.

[40] "African Policy Monitor," COVID-19 Africa Watch (blog), accessed February 4, 2021,.

[41] "Somalia Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) COVID-19 (August 2020) - Somalia," ReliefWeb, accessed February 3, 2021,.

[42] "Isiolo County, Kenya: Local radio stations aid in creating awareness on COVID-19 and Gender-Based Violence," accessed February 4, 2021,.

[43] "Keta, Ghana: Agribusiness offers women and youth greater food security during pandemic," International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) (blog), December 21, 2020,.

[44] "Liberia: Ebola contact tracing lessons inform COVID-19 Response," UN News, April 25, 2020,

[45] "COVID-19 in Africa: Driver of conflict, or too early to tell?," ECDPM, accessed February 3, 2021, .

[46] "COVID-19: An opportunity to reflect on approaches to and the conducting of elections in Africa," ACCORD, accessed February 12, 2021, .

[47] Particularly, women and youth associated with armed groups

[48] Elite capture is defined by the World Bank brief on "CDD and Elite Capture: Reframing the conversation", as "situations where elites shape development processes according to their own priorities and/or appropriate development resources for private gain: "CDD and Elite Capture : Reframing the Conversation," Text/HTML, World Bank, accessed February 12, 2021, .

[49] Important contributors to the peace process do not always possess the personal means (i.e. smartphones) nor the necessary infrastructure (i.e. internet connectivity) that enable them to do so: "The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Mobile for Development* (blog), accessed February 12, 2021,

[50] "Can we build peace from a distance?," International Alert, accessed January 21, 2021, .

[51] "International Funding for Peacebuilding: Will COVID-19 change or reinforce existing trends? - ECDPM," accessed February 25, 2021,

[52] "International aid prioritizes the pandemic over peace. But at what cost? | United States Institute of Peace," accessed February 12, 2021, .

[53] African Union Technical Mission in the Gambia.

[54] "Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet Somalia - Somalia," ReliefWeb, accessed February 25, 2021,

[55] Zebulon Takwa, "Addressing the climate change insecurity challenge in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin" (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2020).

[56] "Spreading Disease, Spreading Conflict? COVID-19, Climate Change and Security Risks - World," ReliefWeb, accessed February 2, 2021, .

[57] "Preventing, Mitigating & Resolving Transhumance-Related Conflicts in UN Peacekeeping Settings (2020)," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed February 2, 2021, .

[58] Evan F. Griffith et al., "COVID-19 in Pastoral Contexts in the Greater Horn of Africa: Implications and Recommendations," *Pastoralism* 10, no. 1 (October 13, 2020): 22, .

[59] "10 Insights into Climate Impacts and Peace," adelphi, accessed February 2, 2021, .

[60] "Chair's Summary - Assessing Climate-Related Security and Development Risks in Africa," cairopeacekeeping, accessed February 4, 2021, .

[61] Ibid.

[62] "Locusts wreak havoc on East African Agriculture - African Business," accessed February 6, 2021,

[63] "Coronavirus hampers response as locust outbreak builds in East Africa," The New Humanitarian, April 28, 2020, .

[64] "Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet Somalia - Somalia."

[65] "Chair's Summary - Assessing Climate-Related Security and Development Risks in Africa," cairopeacekeeping, accessed February 4, 2021, .

[66] The women, peace and security agenda encompasses four pillars: 1) the role of women in conflict prevention, 2) their participation in peacebuilding, 3) the protection of their rights during and after conflict, and 4) their specific needs during recovery.

[67] "This Is How COVID-19 is affecting informal workers," World Economic Forum, accessed February 8, 2021,

[68] "OHCHR | 'Seven Actions': A Guide to Protect African Women's Rights during COVID-19," accessed February 8, 2021, .

[69] "Gender-Based Violence: We must flatten the curve of this shadow pandemic," Africa Renewal, November 30, 2020, .

[70] Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com), "Violence against Women: Africa's Shadow Pandemic | DW | 06.10.2020," DW.COM, accessed February 8, 2021, .

[71] "COVID-19 Testing and Cases Among Women in Conflict Settings May Be Underreported, New IRC Analysis Finds - World," ReliefWeb, accessed February 8, 2021, .

[72] "COVID-19 hits life-saving health services in Africa," WHO | Regional Office for Africa, accessed February 8, 2021, .

[73] "Fact Sheet: Women's Empowerment 2014-April 2020" (National Council of Women, n.d.), .

[74] "Togo - COVID-19 Crisis Response Development Policy Financing," Text/HTML, World Bank, 19, accessed February 25, 2021,

[75] "AU Guidelines on Gender Responsive Responses to COVID-19 | African Union," accessed February 3, 2021, .

[76] "The Important Role of Women Peacebuilders in COVID-19 Pandemic Response - World," ReliefWeb, accessed February 25, 2021,

[77] "Women in Senegal Using WhatsApp to Fight COVID-19," ActionAid Australia, July 21, 2020,

[78] "The Important Role of Women Peacebuilders in COVID-19 Pandemic Response - World."

[79] "Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism" (Institute for Economics & Peace., November 2020),

[80] LI M. Julie Coleman J. D., "The Impact of Coronavirus on Terrorism in the Sahel," April 16, 2020,

[81] "The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism" (Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, December 2020),

[82] "Chair's Summary - Terrorism in the Shadow of the Pandemic."

[83] Eisentraut, Sophie, Luca Miehe, Laura Hartmann, and Juliane Kabus. "Munich Security Report Special Edition on Development, Fragility, and Conflict in the Era of Covid-19," n.d.

[84] Eisentraut, et al.,. "Munich Security Report".

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

[87] "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism." – Publications, United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (blog), last accessed on 13 July 2020

[88] Coleman "The Impact of Coronavirus on Terrorism in the Sahel," https://icct.nl/publication/the-impact-of-coronavirus-on-terrorism-in-the-sahel/.

[89] "MNJTF, Nigerian Army Strategise to Defeat Boko Haram | The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World NewsNigeria — The Guardian Nigeria News – Nigeria and World News," accessed February 25, 2021,

[90] "G5 SAHEL - 1.200 Soldats Tchadiens Dans La «zone Des Trois Frontières»," accessed February 25, 2021,

[91] resulting from armed conflict, violence, persecution, and climate-related shocks

[92] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Forced Displacement Passes 80 Million by Mid-2020 as COVID-19 Tests Refugee Protection Globally," UNHCR, accessed February 11, 2021, .

[93] "UNSDG | Policy Brief: COVID-19 and People on the Move," accessed February 12, 2021, .

[94] "Record Number of Forcibly Displaced Africans Likely to Grow," Africa Center for Strategic Studies (blog), accessed February 11, 2021, .

[95] the Africa Center for Strategic Studies June 24 and 2020, "Record 29 Million Africans Are Forcibly Displaced," Africa Center for Strategic Studies (blog), accessed February 11, 2021, .

[96] In 2020, refugee returns dropped by 22 percent compared to 2019 (UNHCR, 2020).

[97]"By April 2020, around 168 states had partially or fully closed their borders to curb the spread of COVID-19, with up to 91 countries making no exception for people seeking asylum. This in turn reduced asylum application by a third compared to the same period in 2019" (UNHCR, 2020).

[98] "IASC Interim Guidance on COVID-19 for Outbreak Readiness and Response Operations - Camps and Camp-like Settings.Pdf," Google Docs, accessed February 11, 2021.

[99] Ibid.

[100] "The Impact of COVID 19 on Forcibly Displaced Persons in Developing Countries - OECD," accessed February 11, 2021, .

[101] For instance, in Burkina Faso, the number of acutely food insecure people tripled between June-August 2020, compared to before COVID-19 (IOM, 2020).

[102] including but not limited to decongestion, surveillance, testing, treatment.

[103] For instance, space in some South Sudanese Protection of Civilian (POC) camps are limited to the extent that around eight people reside in the same tent which makes physical distancing nearly impossible (SSHAP, 2020).

[104] Nick TurseNick TurseMarch 26 2020 and 11:33 P.m, "In West African Coronavirus Hot Spot, War Has Left 700,000 Homeless and Exposed," The Intercept, accessed February 11, 2021, .

[105] Despite the mobility restrictions imposed by governments worldwide, the loss of livelihood opportunities, food insecurity, mounting socioeconomic stressors and stalled resettlement programmes have compelled some to resort to negative coping mechanisms - which put the forcibly displaced perilous and deadly situations - such as smuggling and trafficking, including child marriage (IOM, 2020).

[106] It must also be noted that the pandemic has negative psychological impacts especially among survivors of gender-based violence,of trafficking, unaccompanied or separated children, and it increases their risk of revictimization. UNODC (2020). Global Report on Trafficking in Persons.

[107] Such as awareness campaigns, ensuring affordable and sustainable access to WASH particularly in households, schools and health facilities for FDPs, establishing detection, quarantine and treatments zones, and enhancing care referral mechanisms and access to necessary medications and medical equipment for FDP. This is in addition to introducing activities that aim to build the capacities of health-care professionals working directly with FDPs through training on case detection and case management, as well as introducing information technology equipment for FDPs and host communities.

[108] Which aims to extend and scale-up social safety nets for FPDs amidst the pandemic by means of cash transfer measures and supporting measures to increase their self-reliance. Moreover, several African countries conducted comprehensive assessments of the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 in order to better inform their responses, all while ensuring their integration in long-term recovery socioeconomic plan.

[109] A worthy example in this regard is Egypt's Response Plan for Refugees and Asylum-Seekers from Sub-Saharan Africa, Iraq & Yemen 2020. https://reliefweb.int/report/egypt/egypt-response-plan-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-sub-saharan-africa-iraq-yemen-2020.

[110]Razza, Namie Di. "UN Peacekeeping and the Protection of Civilians in the COVID-19 Era." *IPI Global Observatory* (blog), May 22, 2020. https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/05/un-peacekeeping-protection-of-civilians-in-covid-19-era/.

[111] Tchioffo Kodjo, "Communiqué of the 918th Meeting of the PSC Held on 14 April 2020, on the Impact of the Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Outbreak on Peace and Security in Africa-African Union - Peace and Security Department," African Union,Peace and Security Department, accessed February 25, 2021,

[112] Nations, United. "United Nations Peacekeeping Continues Vital Work amid COVID-19 Pandemic." United Nations. United Nations. Accessed February 7, 2021. https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/united-nations-peacekeeping-continues-vital-work-amid-covid-19.

[113] The Effects of COVID-19 on AMISOM Operations in Somalia,

[114]"COVID19 and UN Peacekeeping: Posing Existing Global Governance Questions with New Urgency: Weinberg College Center for International and Area Studies - Northwestern University." Accessed February 7, 2021. https://wccias.northwestern.edu/covid-19-research/covid19-and-un-peacekeeping-posing-existing-global-governance-questions-with-new-urgency.html.

[115]International Peace Institute. "COVID-19 Crisis an Opportunity to 'Rethink and Develop UN Peacekeeping Further,'" October 7, 2020. https://www.ipinst.org/2020/10/un-peace-ops-during-covid-19-high-level-dialogue.

[116] The Effects of COVID-19 on AMISOM Operations in Somalia, https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/the-effects-of-covid-19-on-amisom-operations-in-somalia/

[117] "COVID19 and UN Peacekeeping: Posing Existing Global Governance Questions with New Urgency,": Weinberg College Center for International and Area Studies - Northwestern University.," accessed 7 February

7, 2021,. https://wccias.northwestern.edu/covid-19-research/covid19-and-un-peacekeeping-posing-existing-global-governance-questions-with-new-urgency.html.

[118] International Peace Institute. "COVID-19 Crisis an Opportunity to 'Rethink and Develop UN Peacekeeping Further,'" October 7, 2020. https://www.ipinst.org/2020/10/un-peace-ops-during-covid-19-high-level-dialogue.

[119] "Adoption of the African Union Doctrine on Peace Support Operations by the 3rd Extraordinary Meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security -African Union - Peace and Security Department,"

[120] African Development Bank, "Post COVID-19: Rebuilding Africa and Strengthening Its Resilience against Future Economic Shocks," Text, African Development Bank - Building today, a better Africa tomorrow (African Development Bank Group, August 24, 2020), https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/post-covid-19-rebuilding-africa-and-strengthening-its-resilience-against-future-economic-shocks-37467.

[121] "Three Pillars of Africa's COVID-19 Recovery," accessed February 1, 2021,

[122] "Polypandemie: Sonderausgabe Des Munich Security Report," accessed February 25, 2021,

[123] "Updated Estimates of the Impact of COVID-19 on Global Poverty: Looking Back at 2020 and the Outlook for 2021," accessed January 31, 2021,

[124] "Chair's Summary - Terrorism in the Shadow of the Pandemic," cairopeacekeeping, accessed February 1, 2021,

[125] "APRM Policy Brief 2 - APRM Virtual Dialogue with AU Member-States on Their Response to COVID-19 and Progress on Voluntary National Reviews 2020," *APRM* (blog), 2, accessed February 25, 2021,

[126] "Preventing Violent Extremism | UNDP in Kenya," UNDP, accessed February 25, 2021,

[127] "Africa's Governance Response To COVID-19," *APRM* (blog), 19, accessed February 25, 2021,

[128] Peace and Security Department, *Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework* (Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Division, Peace and Security Department, 2018),

[129]"Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium | Summary of Key Findings from Phase II (2017-2020)," accessed February 25, 2021,

[130] AfDBGroup, *GI Forum Webinar: Solomon Quaynor, Vice President, Private Sector, Infrastructure & Industrialization, African Development Bank*, 2020,

[131] "Additions to IDA Resources: Nineteenth Replenishment - Ten Years to 2030: Growth, People, Resilience," Text/HTML, World Bank, accessed February 25, 2021,

[132] "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism | Office of Counter-Terrorism," accessed February 25, 2021,

[133] "Decade of Action – United Nations Sustainable Development," accessed February 25, 2021,

[134] "Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution 2282 (2016) on Review of United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," accessed February 25, 2021,

[135] "Security Council Urges Peacebuilding Commission to Maintain Support for Countries Emerging from Conflict, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2558 (2020) | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," accessed February 25, 2021, https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14399.doc.htm.

[136] Tchioffo Kodjo, "Policy On Post-Conflict Reconstruction And Development (PCRD)-African Union - Peace and Security Department," African Union, Peace and Security Department, accessed November 25, 2019,

[137] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Refworld | Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General," Refworld, accessed February 25, 2021, https://www.refworld.org/docid/50f3fd382.html.

[138] "Roadmap for Localizing the SDGs: Implementation and Monitoring at Subnational Level," accessed February 25, 2021,

[139] "Landmark Resolution on Women, Peace and Security (Security Council Resolution 1325)," accessed February 25, 2021, .

[140] COVID-19, Women, Peace and Security Agenda and Multilateralism, September 2020, https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20200930/covid-19-women-peace-and-security-agenda-and-multilateralism

[141] "COVID-19 is likely to increase youth unemployment in Africa, this is how business can mitigate the damage," World Economic Forum, accessed February 25, 2021,

[142] "News from Voice-Whole-Society-Approach-Covid-19-Pandemichttps: | Association for Progressive Communications," accessed February 26, 2021,

[143] "| Pathways for Peace," accessed November 12, 2019,

[144] "Global Peace Index 2020 - World," ReliefWeb, accessed February 25, 2021,

[145] "Foresight Africa 2021."

[146] African Development Bank, "Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa," Text, African Development Bank - Building today, a better Africa tomorrow (African Development Bank Group, April 19, 2019), https://www.afdb.org/en/topics-and-sectors/initiatives-partnerships/sustainable-energy-fund-for-africa.

[147] "Continental Business Network (CBN)," *Virtual PIDA Information Centre* (blog), May 2, 2017,

[148] "Rural electrification through solar powered mini-grids: a study of private sector models in Kenya," UNEP DTU Partnership, accessed 25 February 2021, https://unepdtu.org/project/rural-electrification-through-solar-powered-mini-grids-a-study-of-private-sector-models-in-kenya/

[149] "What Happened to the Nexus Approach in the COVID-19 response?" ReliefWeb, accessed 25 February 2021, https://reliefweb.int/report/world/what-happened-nexus-approach-covid-19-response

[150] "Oxfam Discussion Paper: The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus - What Does It Mean for Multi-Mandated Organizations? (June 2019) - Oxfam | Food Security Cluster," accessed February 25, 2021,

[151] "Operationalizing the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus: Lessons from Colombia, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and Turkey - | IOM Online Bookstore," accessed February 25, 2021,

[152] "Food Assistance for Assets | World Food Programme," accessed February 25, 2021,

[153] "The New Humanitarian | Searching for the Nexus: Priorities, Principles, and Politics."

[154] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework," UNHCR, accessed November 28, 2019,

[155] "The Programme Cycle and the Nexus," Development Initiatives, accessed February 25, 2021,

[156] Peace funding often receives very little attention compared to development and humanitarian funding.

[157] "Financing the Nexus Gaps and Opportunities from a Field Perspective | NRC," accessed February 25, 2021,

[158] That are inclusive, gender and context sensitive that reinforces and strengthens existing local capacities, as well as promotes local leadership, governance and institution-building.