



## Third Africa Rural Development Forum (ARDF III)

Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo  
(10-12 January 2022)

### Introduction

The African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD), in collaboration with partners is organising the third Africa Rural Development Forum (ARDF) to be held under the patronage of H.E. Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chairperson of the African Union. The theme of this high-level forum is: ***Decentralized Rural Transformation Planning through Experience Capitalization***<sup>1</sup>.

The ARDF is a major component of AUDA-NEPAD Rural Futures Program (RFP), which is a multi-sectoral approach for advancing rural transformation across Africa, to facilitate new thinking and reach broad agreement with respect to the vision, strategies and plans for accelerated and sustainable development for attaining the vision of African Union's Agenda 2063. The forum, this year is holding under a reshuffling of various global challenges and priorities among which we have: i) Rebuilding better of post-Covid 19; the ongoing discussions triggered by the global challenges of food systems (UNFSS) in meeting its target of zero hunger by 2030; ii) the ongoing discussions to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26); iii) the ongoing negotiation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) that seeks to ensure that the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity is integrated into policies that will guide the post-pandemic economic and development recovery plans.

Within those changing global priorities, Africa faces many other challenges, of which its demographic profile is central to the structural and rural transformation debate. A radically changing rural Africa will need to provide as many agricultural and non-agricultural jobs as possible. Decades of hard-wired duality in the economic systems of most African countries, characterised by the production of primary goods for exports has left a large proportion of the population in rural poverty and urban unemployment, with inherent structural limitations to growth. New inclusive growth with employment is essential. Additionally, new territories are emerging at an increasing rate because of the densification of road, transportation and infrastructure networks and the development of rural centres and small towns, stimulated by trade in their largely rural locality. Territorial planning is therefore fundamental to economic development as it reshapes, “the forms and functions of cities and regions to generate endogenous economic growth, prosperity and employment, while addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, marginalized or underserved groups”<sup>2</sup>.

Rural development is critical to sustainable economic development in Africa as majority of its population live in rural areas. Also, most African economies are still heavily reliant on their rural economies as a primary driver of growth and development. Many economic activities especially those related to agriculture and the extractives sector are largely carried out within the rural space. However, some national and local Government policies have not always been successful in addressing the needs of rural communities or at tapping into their considerable potential.

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<sup>1</sup>**Experience capitalization** is the process through which an experience is identified, validated and documented, leading to lessons learning, identification of potential good practices and their subsequent adoption.

<sup>2</sup> International guidelines on urban and territorial planning. (UN Habitat)

[https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ig-utp\\_english.pdf](https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ig-utp_english.pdf)

The integrated nature of sustainable development and Agenda 2063 demands solid collaboration across sectors, within continental, regional, national and sub national spheres. It involves multiple ministries, academia, development partners, civil societies, women and youth. This cross sectoral approach increasingly uses innovative tools to manage the performance of public policies, flagship programs and service delivery. These approaches are fostering more inclusive, collaborative and responsive processes across the development cycle: from planning, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation. The capacity gaps in most African countries is a cog in leveraging these emerging approaches. Hence, the Rural Futures Programme draws multi-stakeholders and partnerships in its implementation. The key partners include AFD, CIRAD, WFP, UNECA, AUC, CTA, GIZ, FAO, and IFAD. In response to the outcomes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Africa Rural Development Forum of 2016, which called on AUDA to incorporate tourism in its rural transformation interventions, AUDA is partnering with the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) on rural tourism

The implementation of the Rural Futures programme led to:

- The creation of the Blueprint to Implement Rural Development Policies in Africa
- The development of the Operation Strategy for the Blueprint to Implement Rural Development in Africa
- Skill gap analysis report for selected African countries
- The design of projects, such as enhancing employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for the rural youths in the continent
- A collaborative e-platform for rural development
- Two editions of a Rural Transformation Atlas
- A report on territorial approaches for rural development, and
- The establishment of the Africa Rural Development Forum as a unique multistakeholder engagement platform for peer learning and facilitating innovations for rural transformation.

### **Background to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Rural Development Forum**

The African Heads of State during the January 2011 African Union (AU) Summit recognised the challenges faced by rural communities and called for an integrated development initiative to promote rural transformation. In 2013, after the development of the rural future program and in implementing the 2011 AU Summit Decisions, AUDA-NEPAD organized in Cotonou its first forum on rural transformation in Africa. This first Africa Rural Development Forum (ARDF) was hosted by the Republic of Benin in May 2013 under the theme *Sustainable Rural Transformation Agenda for Africa*. This forum allowed for a participatory process to gather the opinions of member states, RECs, NGOs, the private sector and development partners on the content of the Rural Futures Program for its finalization. Another important key outcome of the first ARDF was the adoption of the Cotonou Declaration on Rural Futures to support the structural transformation of the continent and guide its possible development pathways. Additionally, the Cotonou Declaration called for the development of a Rural Development Blueprint to be submitted to the African Heads of State and Government for endorsement, with the aim of paving the way for a shared commitment to implement actions at country and regional levels towards revitalisation and transformation of rural areas.

In 2016, the second ARDF was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 8 to 10 September 2016, under the theme *Transforming Africa's Rural Area through Skills Development, Job Creation and Youth Economic Empowerment*. This second edition of the Forum on Rural Transformation organized by NEPAD in Yaoundé consolidated and finalized the blueprint. Additionally, in organising the second ARDF, a rural economic transformation paradigm emerged from the conference. Elements of this paradigm included the central role and responsibility of the state in leading the vision and creating a conducive policy and legal environment; mobilising the food and agriculture system; stimulating growth of the rural non-farm economy and strengthening rural-urban linkages; building and

sustaining the rural human capital base; building institutions for rural transformation; and political will as the main motivator of rural transformation in Africa. The Declaration of the Forum also places particular emphasis on the development of a "Blueprint" for rural transformation that will serve as a guide to the member states of the African Union. This blueprint will help concretize the implementation of the rural transformation program at the continental level. In the interim, an Atlas on Rural Transformation has been produced. It includes several themes that will help countries in their rural development policies. At present, the atlas has been consolidated in an electronic platform in support of the States. The paradigm culminated into the production of the Operation Strategy for the Blueprint to Implement Rural Development Policies in Africa.

Finally in 2018, the blueprint was submitted to the African Union Heads of State and Government Summit for adoption. Since then, the NEPAD Agency has developed a plan for its operationalization. Based on the Blueprint and the national plans, AUDA and its partners have been testing the idea of integrated rural development to develop and document innovative good practices, identify conditions for scaling up, and see how these practices can be replicated.

To build on milestones reached since the inaugural edition of ARDF in 2013 on one hand and identify how to key into emerging and innovative approaches to rural transformation, the AUDA-NEPAD, in collaboration with its partners is organising the third ARDF to be held under the patronage of Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The theme of the forum is: *Decentralized Rural Transformation Planning through Experience Capitalization*.

### **The Objectives of the Conference**

To augment the capacity in planning process in support of territorial development and transformation agenda, there is a critical need to strengthen the evidence base. This includes spatially disaggregated analysis of growth, analysis of poverty and inequality, covering both monetary and non-monetary dimensions; data on the spatial pattern of production and employment, wage rates, population movements; and trends in land use change, public revenue over the period, and patterns of public spending (current and capital) disaggregated by sector and by region, etc.

AUDA-NEPAD is involved in several strategic partnerships in its rural transformation projects and programme across the continent. The forum is an opportunity converge and interrogate emerging trends and approaches in rural transformation, that could improve planning, learning and knowledge for a sustainable rural transformation.

The objectives of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Africa Rural Development Forum are:

1. To identify scalable practices on planning for rural transformation
2. Discuss amongst stakeholders' groups efficient policies and decisions-making tools for transformational rural development;
3. Share lessons on south-south cooperation, multisectoral and intersectoral approaches towards rural transformation, and
4. Endorse the document titled the Operation Strategy for the Blueprint to Implement Rural Development in Africa

### **Structure of the Conference**

The 3-day forum would be organised around High-Level moderated discussions, exhibitions, workshops along different thematic areas in parallel sessions. Discussions on the thematic areas would be led by knowledge institutions and experts in the differentiated segments. The thematic areas include:

1. Dedicated inputs that will lead to robust planning for rural transformation in Africa
2. Thematic sessions structured to share knowledge and available tools and methodologies on the six sub-themes as listed below:
  - Climate Adaptation and Resilient Environment for Development
  - Citizen Engagement and Digital Innovations for Rural Service Delivery
  - Inclusive and Evidence-Based Planning Systems for Rural Development
  - Economic Recovery for Rural Communities Post Covid-19
  - Rural Infrastructure Development
  - Decent Rural Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship

### **Expected Outcomes**

The expected results of the conference include:

1. Identifying a range of policy options that African countries could deploy in strengthening planning within rural territories
2. Improved partnerships, experience sharing and innovative approaches on rural development, territorial planning, skills development
3. Enhance national capacity systems to predict, monitor and evaluate socio-economic shocks. The use of GIS and AUDA e-platform for rural transformation, the use of guidelines for rural development across other sectors of Government concerning data management for evidence-based decision making
4. Recommendations and call to action for robust rural transformation planning.

**Venue:** Kinshasa, DRC

**Date:** 10-12 January 2022

### **Participants**

The Conference is open to all interested, including member states, with representation at various levels such Ministers; experts, civil society including youth and private sector, development partners, local authorities.

### **Language**

All plenary and break-away sessions will have English-French simultaneous interpretation.