



# HABARI

March 2023 Newsletter



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## AUDA-NEPAD Celebrating Women at the Agency and in Africa during Women's Month

AUDA-NEPAD is celebrating African women and reflecting on women's empowerment during international women's month. See and listen to what AUDA-NEPAD colleagues had to say as the agency works towards a more equitable society to achieve the Agenda 2063 Vision.



**Basisipho Jack:** *"International Women's Day is a recognition of all the women that have come before us and have paved the way for people like me and you to be where are today. It is a reminder to acknowledge women and the trials they are still facing. We are not where we are supposed to be, and it needs to be a concerted effort to build a world where women are seen as equals and have the same opportunities as men and are lifted up"*

**Corine Kounga:** *"A woman is a pillar of society. I wish all women strength because we are mothers, sisters, and leaders in all spheres of life"*

**Victoria Afam:** *"Women are the structure and support of society. If you train a woman, you train a nation, you train the world. Women need to be appreciated at all times, not only on Women's Day but every day of their lives"*

**Dudzile Mkumla:** *"We are strong enough to fight for ourselves and face the challenges that we come across. We are able to do as much as men can. We are not limited and independent"*

**Lazare Edzogo:** *"A woman is a pillar of society. Women have to be treated as equals"*

**Vincent Moola:** *"We appreciate women and it is a day to celebrate the importance of women in society"*

**Grace Sauls:** *"On International Women's Day we celebrate where women are coming from and where women are today in society. I think women are the most fabulous creatures on the planet. Women can turn stones into gold, they can turn a house into a home. Happy Women's Day"*



## Celebrating women and empowering communities

In recognition of the role of women in the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) Programme and as part of celebrating the International Women's Day on 8th March 2023, the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), in collaboration with the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) Secretariat and the World Food Programme held a capacity building training for women in the HGSF Programme to equip them with innovative tools to build their digital capacity and promote their leadership skills.

The training, held on the land of the African Union Champion for Gender and Development Issues, H.E Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, provided an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the women enrolled in the HGSF programme towards alleviating hunger, supporting school attendance and enrolment, reducing dropout rates, and ensuring that children learn and perform better in school. In addition, through the purchase and use of locally and domestically produced food, the training also demonstrated how the programme benefits local farmers, caterers, among other agents of the community to foster local economic growth and advance grassroot development.

Considering the theme of the International Women's Day chosen by the United Nations "DigitALL: innovation and technology for Gender equality", innovative technologies are needed and crucial to reinforce the school feeding programme in Africa. A country such as Ghana developed its school feeding programme as a strategy to improve education, boost local economies and smallholder agriculture, while also advancing attainment of the CAADP Malabo Commitments (2025), the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals SDGs (2030), and the African Union Agenda 2063.

Speaking at the event, on behalf of Mrs Nardos Bekele-Thomas, Chief Executive Officer of AUDA-



NEPAD, Mrs Jessica Annor, Head of Gender, expressed her gratitude to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Ghana School Feeding Programme Secretariat and all partners for supporting and empowering communities with innovative tools through the HGSF Programme. She emphasized the need to be on women's side by supporting them, individualising them, discussing with them and Elevating our collective knowledge of the daily challenges they face in order to become true champions of gender equality.

The celebration also drew participation of the Deputy Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection of the Republic of Ghana, H.E. Francisca Oteng Mensah who encouraged Women to keep pushing [for the better] and use the skills women learnt from the event to enhance themselves and others. The Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) represented by the Director for Women in Agricultural Development, Dr. Paulina Addy called attention to the need to provide food for children and prevent chronic undernutrition. The Ghana School Feeding Programme Secretariat, represented by its Deputy National Coordinator Mr. Kojo Abbass Acquah, underscored the many successes that the HGSF Programme brings including educational and health and its contribution to improving domestic food production by creating a structured and stable market. HarvestPlus Nigeria represented by its Country Manager Mr. Yusuf Dollah Fou'ad stressed the importance of healthy diets to nourish the body and the need to produce bio-fortified crops that can help to alleviate hidden hunger whose effects are irreversible. The Women's Entrepreneurship Day Organization (WEDO) represented by its West Africa Regional Ambassador Ms. Toyin Dania informed the audience of her ongoing work with vulnerable mothers and children, training them in vocational and entrepreneurial skills. Food4AllAfrica, a non-profit organisation represented by its Client Service Officer Ms. Randa Ekuban explained their work of supporting school feeding by distributing lunch boxes (hot meals) to school children, providing vocational training on safe

and hygiene environments to teachers and caterers as well as renovating and building kitchens and installing kitchen equipment.

The women cooks and the caterers were trained in the use of the School Meal Planner (SMP) a digital tool aiming to improve the quality and nutritional value of school menus. The training included the use of local nutritious ingredients such as soya and biofortified cassava to meet the daily dietary intake of the school going children. Additionally, the use of handy measures tools was demonstrated to the cooks to allow for reduction of

food waste by measuring the right quantity of food when preparing school meals. These activities preceded the exchange of best practices on Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme between the HGSF teams from Ghana and from Nigeria under the leadership of Mrs. Kefilwe Moalosi, Head of Nutrition, AUDA-NEPAD. Both teams shared their experiences and successful practices of designing and implementing a comprehensive HGSF programme.



## Promoting Decent Jobs for Rural Youth in Africa

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching consequences for Africa. According to McKinsey's report on Tackling COVID-19 In Africa - An unfolding health and economic crisis that demands bold action, economic losses and job cuts in Africa are estimated at \$200 billion and 200 million respectively.

In the midst of this crisis, however, lies an opportunity for the continent to tap into its greatest asset - its youth population, which is expected to reach over 830 million by 2050. Investing in young people has the potential to yield tremendous benefits in poverty reduction, employment generation, and food and nutrition security.

Unfortunately, there are obstacles that limit the potential of young people, including constraints on access to land, resources, finance, technology, knowledge, information, and education. There have been many national youth policies and programmes designed to improve development outcomes for young people. However, these policies and programmes often do not translate into appropriate budget allocations or effective implementation and results, particularly for rural youth.

To address some of the challenges, the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD) has partnered with several development partners through its Rural Futures Initiative to tackle the mismatch between the education system and emerging livelihood opportunities in rural areas.

The Rural Futures Programme provides funding and technical assistance to government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders working to improve rural development in Africa. The programme also supports research and knowledge-sharing activities to help identify best practices and promote innovation in rural development.

The collaborations have resulted in the



skilling of 1738 youths in agriculture and agribusiness value chains, creating 480 start-ups in rural enterprises, and capacitating 108 training staff on project execution and reporting. AUDA-NEPAD's work has contributed to the creation of 6 National Action Plans for Rural Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship in Benin, Cameroon, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, and



**Amaria Mthembo, a beneficiary of the Rural Futures Initiative**

Zambia; produced 48 curricula across different agriculture and agribusiness value chains; exposed over 490 rural youths to policy dialogues and exhibitions.

Amaria Mthembo, a resident of Chipata in Eastern Zambia, had the chance to attend a skills training program in conservation smart agriculture, where she learned various techniques like inter-cropping and cultivating crops such as soya beans and ground nuts. The training was made possible through a partnership between the Chipata

Trades Training Institute and AUDA-NEPAD's Rural Futures initiative. As a result, Amaria acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to help improve her family's life through farming.

With the training provided, Amaria is now able to support her family with the knowledge she has gained in smart agriculture. This opportunity could potentially help lift her community's standard of living, as the skills she learned will be passed on to others who will replicate what they have learned from her. Through this partnership, the knowledge and skills needed for sustainable agriculture practices in rural areas like Chipata will continue to spread and benefit more individuals and communities.

Despite the achievements, more investments are needed, especially in rural areas. There is need to upscale and out scale the results of our collaborative efforts. The experience in the Continent's rural transformation and youths shows that with little resources, it is possible to turn an unemployed youth into an agri-preneur within a short span of time. Rural youths have the energy, the enthusiasm and can innovate to contribute to sustainable food system locally and nationally.

# Capacity building for 10 selected African MSMEs in digital solutions for green infrastructure and cross-border trade

Ten African micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) have been selected to receive technical advisory services and capacity building. The selected MSMEs provide digital solutions in the domains of green infrastructure and intra-African trade.

The selected MSMEs hail from seven African Union (AU) Member States across all 5 AU regions. The 10 MSMEs were selected from over 50 applicants who responded to the African Union Development Agency's (AUDA-NEPAD) 2022 Call for MSME-led Digital Solutions, with support from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ).

MSMEs were invited to propose solutions which socio-economic and environmental challenges using digital

technologies. MSME submissions included technologies such as machine learning, geo-satellite data, drone, Geographic Information System, mobile applications and online platforms. The Call for MSME-led Digital Solutions is aligned to the Energize Africa initiative, launched during the 77th United Nations General Assembly in New York on Monday, 09 September 2022.

At the launch, CEO of AUDA-NEPAD, Ms Nardos Bekele-Thomas, said "The Energize Africa initiative is about harnessing youths' creativity and skills into the continent's economic growth and development, whilst expanding income opportunities for the youth – through creation of jobs, innovation, and entrepreneurship."

The Call for Digital Solutions built on the success of the first Call for

Proposals, developed in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020. Additionally, it provided 4 African MSMEs with business development assistance to scale-up their innovative ideas that offered solutions to socio-economic challenges.

## About Energize Africa

Energize Africa, an initiative of the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD, is aimed at catalysing and harnessing youths' creativity and innovativeness into Africa's economic growth and development drive, whilst expanding income opportunities for the youth – through creation of jobs, innovation and entrepreneurship.

The selected MSMEs are:

NAME	COUNTRY	DESCRIPTION
<b>Abavubi Fisher</b>	Uganda	Mobile app for use by fisheries value chain actors for record keeping, finance access, market access and information on fishing sites.
<b>AI Technologies Africa</b>	Cameroon	Reducing plastic pollution by connecting each actor in the plastic value chain around a profitable circular economy for all.
<b>Brycoal Nigeria Limited</b>	Nigeria	Harness biomass waste for sustainable charcoal by processing underutilized agricultural waste such as palm nutshell, coconut shells, sugarcane trash and rice husks.
<b>FLOEWS: Flood Early Warning System</b>	Nigeria	Combines technology and a nature-based approach to develop an broad solution for disaster risk management and early warning intelligence.
<b>Iwina Innovation Lab</b>	Nigeria	Offers comprehensive, innovative and sustainable solution targeted at solving complex issues within food and agricultural export market in Sub-Saharan Africa.
<b>Maziko Fintech Solutions Limited</b>	Malawi	Pan-African B2B marketplace for intra-African trade of food and agricultural commodities. The solution aims to help close market access gaps.
<b>Smart Energy Enterprises</b>	Malawi	Smart energy enterprise provides affordable solar pump irrigation systems to small-scale farmers to improve their food and income security
<b>Togo Cargo</b>	Togo	Togo Cargo is a tech logistics company that specializes in the transportation and delivery of technology-related products.
<b>UmojaLands (Pvt) Ltd</b>	Zimbabwe	Umojalands primarily aims to de-risk lending to rural small holder farmers by using intelligent logic derived from alternate datasets such as multispectral satellite remote sensing algorithms to generate crop insights and helps farmers better access the market.
<b>Wfrelly</b>	Egypt	Cloud Inventory, E-commerce, Point-of-sale point, and delivery platform dedicated for supermarkets.

## African Regulators and Decision Makers Visit Biotech and Biosafety Institutions and Farms in India



India is the leading cotton-producing country in the world, with almost 12 million hectares cultivated in 2019, and 94% of the cotton produced was genetically modified. It is in this regard that AUDA-NEPAD's African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE), in partnership with The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), India and Michigan State University (MSU), USA, organised a Biotechnology and Biosafety regulatory study tour for African regulators and decision makers to the country in February 2023.

The primary objective of this study tour was to provide a platform for hands-on experience in modern agricultural biotechnology development and its regulations. The visit also aimed to support the knowledge-based building of functional regulatory systems for biotechnology and emerging technologies like genome editing. A total of 13 participants from 7 African countries took part in the study tour.

Participants interacted with leaders of key institutions such as TERI and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB). They discussed technological and regulatory developments in India, particularly in the cotton sector. The team also visited the seed production facilities of Rasi Seeds and the TERI tissue culture lab in Haryana.

In Maharashtra State, they visited biotechnology facilities and fields run by local seed industry giants such as Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Co Private Limited (Mahyco), Kalash Seeds, and SeedWorks International Pvt Ltd. The State hosts many of the critical actors in the seed industry in India. The team was briefed on the factors for India's successes and challenges in using modern biotechnology for agricultural development.

The final leg of the study tour was in Hyderabad where the team visited field operations of a seed company,

JK Agri Genetics Ltd, and had the opportunity to learn more about JK Seeds' operations in India and Africa.

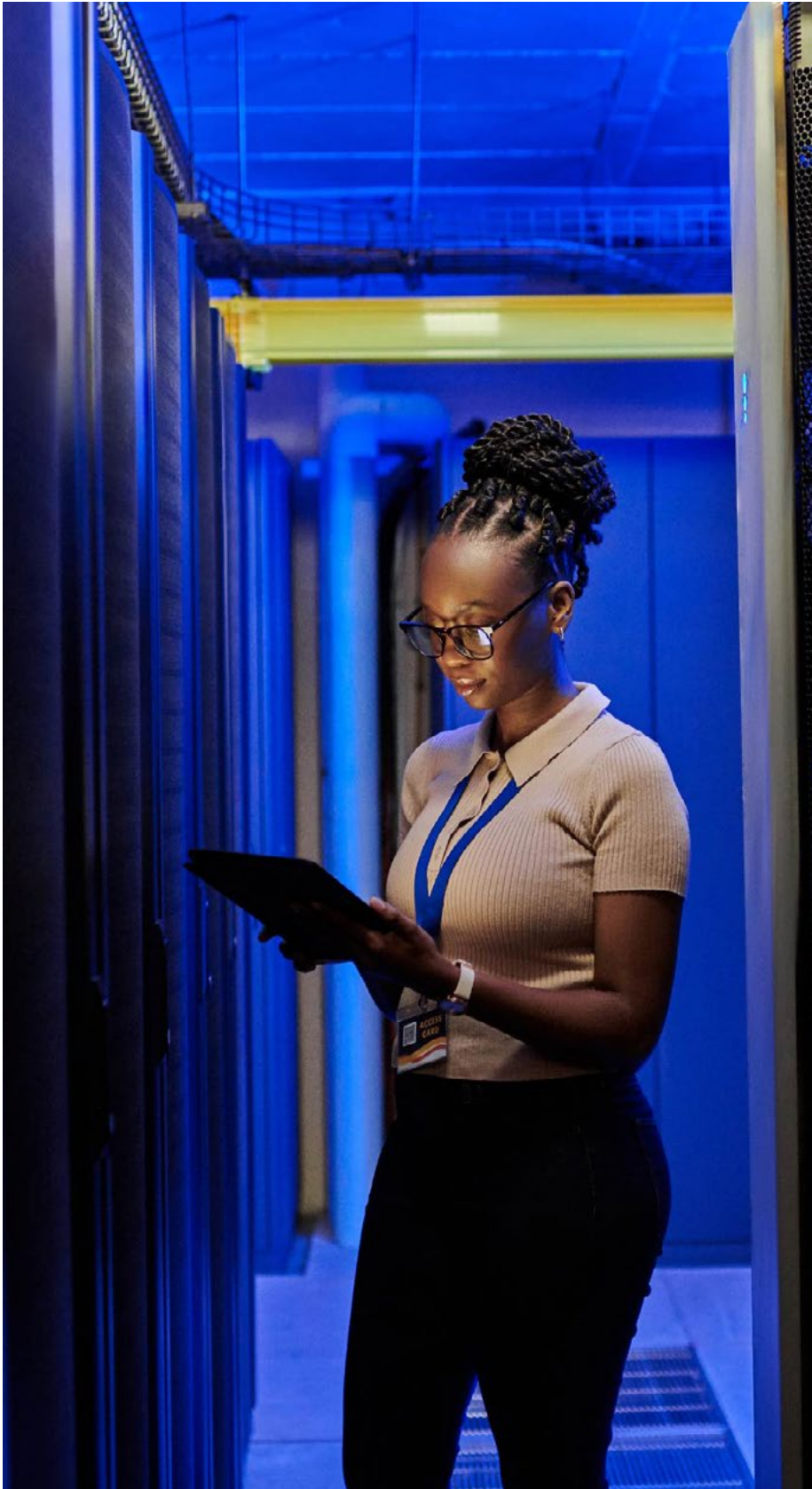
Africa has ecological zones like India, and the continent, through South-South cooperation stands to gain a lot in terms of knowledge and skill transfer in the biotechnology sector. AUDA-NEPAD has backed biotechnology and biosafety study tours to India over the years to help African regulators and decision-makers to garner hands-on experience in modern agricultural biotechnology development and the regulations thereof. AUDA-NEPAD in its selection process for the study tour gives priority to countries that are engaged in the use of this technology so that they learn from the Indian experience.

Agriculture remains a critical economic sector in Africa but it needs to be boosted to meet the food and nutrition needs of the continent and provide vital income for more than 80% of the population. The Indian experience in the cotton sector, which benefits more than 7.5 million farmers and their families, will undoubtedly inspire African stakeholders and decision-makers.

Such vital lessons will help AU member states to implement functional biosafety regulatory systems to safely harness existing and emerging agricultural biotechnologies and nurture a commercial seed system attuned to smallholder farmers.



## Artificial Intelligence is at the core of discussions in Rwanda as the AU High-Level Panel on Emerging Technologies convenes experts to draft the AU-AI Continental Strategy



The African Union High-Level Panel on Emerging Technologies (APET) and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) recently convened African Artificial Intelligence experts at a Writing Workshop in Kigali, Rwanda, from February 27 to March 3, 2023, to finalise the drafting of the African Union Artificial Intelligence (AU-AI) Continental Strategy for Africa.

The goal is to develop a comprehensive strategy that will guide African countries on how to support inclusive and sustainable AI-enabled socio-economic transformation. An AI-driven socio-economic approach has the potential to promote economic growth and development by creating new industries and jobs, increasing productivity, and improving efficiency, which ultimately leads to elevated prosperity and better living standards for all Africans.

Dr William Wasswa, a member of APET and lead on Artificial Intelligence (AI), noted that AI is quickly becoming an epicentre for socio-economic development and growth, and Africa cannot afford to be left behind. APET considers AI as a frontier technology for Africa's socio-economic development and growth since it has the potential to mitigate some of Africa's most pressing challenges, such as access to healthcare, education, and financial services. By leveraging AI, these services can be made more accessible, affordable, and effective, particularly for underserved communities. Therefore, it is imperative for Africa to harness this technology for socio-economic development and growth.

To develop the continental strategy, the all-African AI experts have held several writing workshops since May 2022 in Dakar, Senegal, and have emphasised the need for a continuous review and adaptation of the strategy to ensure





that it is not obsolete in the near future. Dr Wasswa noted that AI is continuously changing and evolving, and therefore, the continental strategy should also be updated regularly to keep up with the latest trends and developments.

Dr Justina Dugbazah, the Coordinator of the APET-Calestous Juma Executive Dialogue (CJED) programme and Senior Programme Officer of Education and Social Development at AUDA-NEPAD, remarked that currently, most African countries lack comprehensive AI policy frameworks to promote responsible AI adoption. As a result, this is impeding AI-driven socio-economic development and high-quality African data gathering, processing, and interpretation. The AU-AI Continental Strategy seeks to guide these areas.

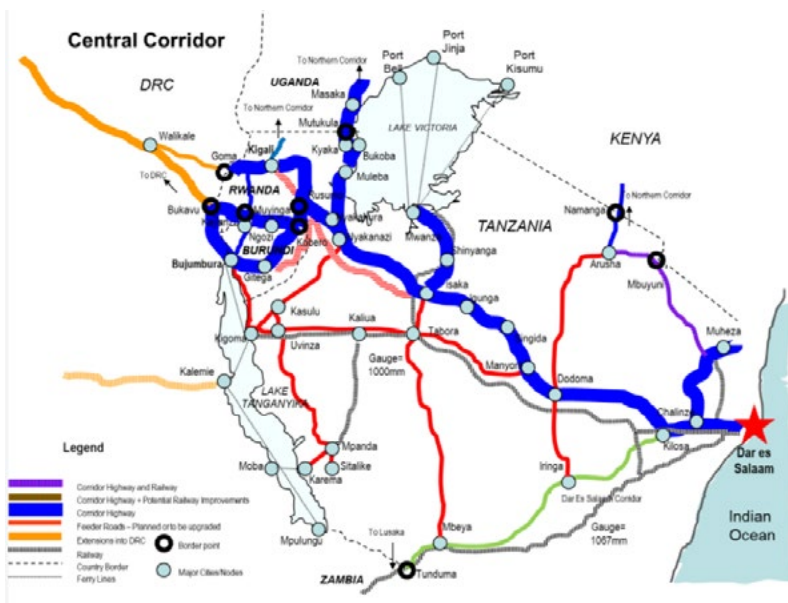
The African Union AI Continental Strategy for Africa also seeks to address the concerns regarding job losses and enhancing job creation opportunities through the integration of AI in various industries. This includes fostering human capital development and skills development in AI in agriculture, healthcare, finance, telecommunications, transportation, water management, and mining. There is also a need to develop the necessary mindset changes required to harness and implement AI successfully in Africa. APET believes that AU Member States have the potential to create significant AI-related job opportunities and promote AI-based entrepreneurship. However, the successful implementation of AI in these various industries requires significant human capital development.

The AI experts also visited the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR Rwanda) to learn about how Rwanda is shaping the trajectory of the fourth industrial revolution and adopting AI for the advancement of local communities.

It was identified during deliberations that to fully realise the enormous potential of AI in Africa, a comprehensive strategy to develop and strengthen competition laws, legal liability frameworks and intellectual property laws, the democratisation of AI, ethical considerations, and supporting AI ecosystems should be prioritised. AU Member States should have clear implementation frameworks, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms to ensure implementation success. Funding and investment programs and mechanisms across various industries can quantify the return on investment for AI projects and ensure the expected impacts are realised.

Following this workshop, the draft strategy shall be submitted to AU Member States for review and validation to sustain ownership, after which a continentally adopted version shall be launched at the January 2024 AU Summit by Africa's Heads of State and Government

# Connecting East Africa through the Green Infrastructure Corridors for Intra-African Trade Programme



The Green Infrastructure Corridors for Intra-African Trade Programme, jointly implemented by the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), the Central Corridor Transit Transport Facilitation Agency (CCTTFA) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), is a critical initiative that seeks to improve the infrastructure and transport systems of African countries, and encourage intra-regional trade under the framework of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). The selected projects under the programme have the potential to drive economic growth, create jobs, and reduce carbon emissions.

The Central Corridor in Eastern Africa was selected as a pilot corridor to develop, test, and demonstrate “green infrastructure development for intra-African trade.” The corridor is a vital trade route that connects important economic centres in Eastern and Central Africa. The Corridor connects Burundi, DR Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda to others economic corridors and seaports across the continent.

From March 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the AUDA-NEPAD, CCTTFA and GIZ conducted a mission and field visits in Rwanda

to evaluate the feasibility of prioritized projects proposed by the Government of Republic of Rwanda within the Central Corridor.

The projects involved include; the Construction of Sanitary Landfill in Kigali City, Lake A market analysis and feasibility study on use of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) for vessels across Lake Kivu and others inland water transportation networks, Feasibility study of Akagera River navigability, Construction of Gasabo district Centralized Sewerage System in Rwanda, Isaka – Kigali Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) and Muhanga-Mukamira Road Project.

With the construction of the Kigali Sanitary Landfill, the project will significantly improve waste management systems in the capital city of Rwanda. The biogas component of the landfill will convert organic waste into a renewable energy source, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and providing additional energy for the country.

Another important project is the Lake Kivu Transport Programme which seeks to use CNG as an alternative energy source to power ships on Lake Kivu. This project will reduce air pollution caused by the current use of diesel fuel,

benefiting both the environment and the health of the local communities.

The Inland Waterways Special Focus Project will improve navigability on the Akagera River, which runs through Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. This will promote trade, reduce transport costs and will create economic opportunities for the countries involved.

The Central Corridor Roads Climate Proofing Pilot Project aims to make the Muhanga-Mukamira road climate-resilient. By using innovative engineering techniques, the project will reduce the risk of road damage caused by extreme weather events such as flooding and landslides. This will improve road safety, reduce the cost of road maintenance, and ensure reliable transport links, benefiting both businesses and communities in the region.

The Central Corridor Urban Sanitation Project will improve the sewerage system in the Gasabo district of Rwanda. The project will improve environmental conditions in the area, including the reduction of waterborne diseases thereby Improve public health and sanitation, prevent water pollution of all the downstream rivers and mitigate heavy damages caused by flooding events.

Finally, the Central Corridor SGR Project aims to extend the railway system between Isaka in Tanzania and Kigali in Rwanda, as well as between Kigali and Kindu in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The project will unlock the full potential of intra-regional trade, reduce road congestion and wear and tear, and also reduce the costs of transport, boosting the region’s economy.

The mission concluded with the agreement for joint work plans to be developed for the projects through which the projects will be supported by the Green Infrastructure Corridors for Intra-African Trade Programme.

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