

MEMORANDUM

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The Memorandum is issued daily, with the sole purpose to provide updated basic business and economic information on Africa, to more than 4,000 European Companies, as well as their business parties in Africa.

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Due to Technical Improvement works The Memorandum will be issued irregularly until the 11-03-2026. We will catch up with the African News flow.

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TUNISIA: CIVIL SOCIETY A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR OTHER COUNTRIES

In the February 2016 edition of its newsletter, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) published the tribute it paid to Tunisian civil society, five years after the 'Jasmine Revolution' which gave the starting signal for huge upheaval in a region that was seeking democracy.

The tribute included an invitation to Brussels on 21 February 2016 to representatives of the 'Tunisian Quartet' (the two unions - employers and workers, the Tunisian Human Rights League and the bar association) who forced political parties into a national agreement and also to complete the drafting of a Constitution. They were awarded the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize for their commitment.

EESC President Georges Dassis, said that "We, the representatives of European civil society, not only want to pay tribute today to your success in a region that is going through difficult times, but also take inspiration for our work from your achievements and support you in your ongoing and future activities, as we must support all civil society actors in other countries of the region, committed to the establishment of pluralist and participatory democratic systems." (EESC 24-03-2016)

[Introduction on "the role of organized civil society in the democratic transition process: the example of Tunisia"](#)

BOTSWANA DECRIES LIMITED ACCESS TO AGOA

Botswana is one of several countries with limited success in utilizing the preferential market under the United States' African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), according to Acting Trade Minister, Sadique Kebonang.

Speaking in the Botswana Parliament on Friday, Kebonang vowed that his country will develop new strategies to better take advantage of opportunities under the Act.

The minister said these strategies are expected to strategically increase competitiveness and diversification of beneficiary exports to the United States.

Botswana will thus develop her own AGOA strategy during the 2016/17 financial year.

Kebonang said after years of implementation, there is evidence that AGOA has resulted in a substantial increase in exports from Sub-Saharan Africa to the US.

Between 2001 and 2014, exports from AGOA-eligible countries increased by threefold from \$ 1.3 billion to \$4.4 billion through the course of this period.

In addition, AGOA has resulted in a quantum increase in direct US investments in Africa.

In spite of these impressive statistics, Kebonang acknowledged that only a few countries have taken advantage of AGOA while the product coverage under of these countries' exports to the US still remain limited.

AGOA is a unilateral trade preference between the United States and African member states that was signed into law in 2000, for a period of eight years.

It expired in 2008 and was extended to September 2015.

The AGOA programme has now been extended by ten years, and will end on 30 September, 2025.

The Act allows African countries an opportunity to export 6, 500 product lines to the US Duty Free and Quota Free (DFQF).

The products are to be wholly produced in Africa or partly in other AGOA partner countries. (APA 26-02-2016)

MALI GRAIN OUTPUT UP BY 15 PERCENT

Mali's grain production went up by 15 percent in 2015, according to the findings of a Conjunctural agricultural survey which suggested a production of over 8.45 million tons of the produce. Last year's production had reached 690.000 tons.

According to Agriculture Minister, Kassoum Denom, these results are to be credited to the supervision of over 900,000 producers and the 15-percent increase in the budget for agriculture.(APA 26-02-2016)

ANGRY UGANDA OIL PALM FARMERS SUPPORT BIDCO

Farmers in Bugala Island in Kalangala District, Uganda are furious about allegations being made against the Oil Palm Project and Bidco the private investor in the project.

The project is a People Public Private Partnership (4P) between the farmers, Government of Uganda and Oil Palm Uganda Limited a subsidiary of Bidco Uganda Ltd.

The Kalangala Oil Palm Growers Association (KOPGA) an association of 1800 strong farmers have written a counter petition to the UNDP discrediting an earlier one by the Bugala Farmers Association (BFA). At the same time, the Kalangala Oil Palm Growers Trust, the implementing agency that actually contracts farmers, has also taken exception to the claims against the project.

"As one of the main development actors in Kalangala finds these assertions lacking in facts and totally misleading," Nelson Basaalide the KOPGT General Manager said.

KOPGA's Chairman says there is no official record of Bugala Farmers Association anywhere and the individuals associated with the organisation are not part of the project in any way at all.

"We as KOPGA find the letter written by John Muyisa to be incorrect and totally misleading. We are also concerned that the 'Bugala Farmers Association' may be confused for the Kalangala Oil Palm Growers Association by stakeholders which is not the case. We are registered with the District Government since 2006 however there is no record of BFA, their intentions or activities" the letter signed by KOPGA Chairman Martin Lugambwa says.

We are proud to be a part of the project and the development it has brought to Bugala

"We are proud to be a part of the project and the development it has brought to Bugala. Our farmers earn an average of 600 million Uganda Shillings a month from the sale of Oil Palm and this has the potential to reach UX 1.5 billion per month when the plantations reach full maturity," he adds.

The KOPGTrust also shares the same view about the Bugala Farmers Association:

"The petition to UNDP by people pretending to be a voice of the Bugala Farmers is a calculated ploy to discredit the otherwise clean oil palm development project," Basaalide says.

The out growers Association is categorical about the false land grabbing allegations levelled against Bidco Africa over the project.

"The process of acquiring land for the project was the role of the Government of Uganda NOT Bidco. In addition the land acquisition was on willing buyer willing seller basis."

The Trust concurs that no farmer has lost land to the project. Both bodies say there has been no deforestation caused by the project.

"The National Forest Authority is the Custodian of forests in the country and they confirm Bugala's forest Cover is intact."

In a statement Vincent Rubarema the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture in Uganda reinforces this position: "Oil Palm is a tree crop so the cover on the island has improved by about 60%." (KOPGA 25-02-2016).

IFAD, LIBERIA SIGN \$41.6M AGRIC PRODUCTIVITY DEAL

The Liberian government and the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) have signed two agreements in the tune of \$41.6 million to finance the Tree Crops Extension Project (TCEP) and the Rural Community Finance Project (RCFP).

A dispatch from Italy received by APA Friday said the agreements were signed recently in Rome by Liberia's Agriculture Minister Dr. Moses Zinnah and Kanayo F. Nwanze, President of IFAD.

According to the dispatch, the two projects will directly target 35,000 smallholder farmers, boost farmers' income, generate much needed foreign exchange, and contribute more broadly to the country's post-Ebola recovery.

The dispatch indicated that the projects include two IFAD loans totaling \$18.5 million, both granted on highly concessional terms, and a \$5 million IFAD grant.

The government of Liberia will contribute \$2.4 million, while the local population and private sector will contribute an additional \$6.7 million; the dispatch noted adding, the government of Liberia is seeking co-financing of \$9 million from other donors to fund the remainder. •

In remarks at the signing ceremony, Agriculture Minister Zinnah said once implemented, the TCEP will benefit 11,000 stakeholders in the cocoa value chain.

"TCEP will help farmers grow, process and market their cocoa with the participation of the private sector" he said.

Zinnah indicated that the new project will strengthen their resilience to the effects of climate change, adding that a 200-kilometer network farm-to-market road will also be rehabilitated in the project area.

Speaking earlier, Nwanze said the RCFP will facilitate the creation of new Rural Community Financial Institutions in selected areas throughout the country."

It will enhance access to sustainable, diversified and affordable financial services in small and often very isolated rural communities". (APA 26-02-2016)

BOTSWANA TELECOM IPO ATTRACTS MASSIVE INVESTOR INTEREST

The Botswana Telecommunications Corporation Limited (BTCL) initial public offer (IPO) is reported to have been overwhelmed by citizen investors who have shown strong interest in investing in shares of the state-owned telecommunications company, APA learnt here Friday.

BTCL managing director Paul Taylor said the company was "humbled by the incredible reception thus far as thousands continue to submit their offers."

"Indeed, we have been able to engage Batswana of all ages and backgrounds, and it continues to an incredibly rewarding experience in that sense," he said.

He added: “What is clear is that there is room for more and we want to seize every opportunity to maximise citizen engagement in order to drive greater participation in this IPO.”

Taylor said as the nationwide public education roadshow makes its way back to the capital Gaborone after having covered over 6,000km in 31 locations across the country, Botswana citizens have made it clear that they wanted more opportunities for education.

He said over 20,000 Batswana turned out to hear more about being part of Botswana’s most historic IPO.

Taylor said the roadshow continues to be a successful platform to educate Batswana about investment in shares and how to participate in the BTCL IPO.

An IPO is the first offer by a company of its shares for sale or subscription by members of the public.

The Botswana government is selling 49 percent of its shares in BTCL to citizens.(APA 26-02-2016)

MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES IN FRAGILE SITUATIONS IN AFRICA

Many African countries facing fragility have struggled to leverage their resource wealth to realise practical development gains for their populations. The African Development Bank examines how fragile states in Africa can better manage their natural resources to address the causes and drivers of fragility. It provides ideas and recommendations on how to design and implement natural resource–related initiatives to advance development objectives, reduce the risk of conflict, and ultimately make those states less fragile and more resilient.

[READ MORE](#)

AFRICA FINANCE CORPORATION COMPLETES CAPE VERDE ENERGY ACQUISITION

AFRICA Finance Corporation (AFC), the Lagos-based group, has completed the purchase of InfraCo Africa’s stake in the Cabeólica Wind Farm in Cape Verde.

The deal follows the share purchase agreement signed in May 2015 when AFC agreed to purchase InfraCo Africa’s remaining stake in the project.

Andrew Alli, President and Chief Executive Officer of AFC, expressed excitement at taking a larger part in this ground-breaking project.

“The additional share purchase will allow further expansion and other uses of wind energy in Cape Verde. We are very proud of our growing work in addressing Cape Verde’s energy needs through sustainable measures, all the while seeking a competitive return on investment for our shareholders,” said Alli.

Cabeólica is the first privately-financed sustainable wind farm on a commercial scale in sub-Saharan Africa.

It provides access to electricity for 360 000 people, which is about 72 percent of the Cape Verde population.

The project is staffed entirely by skilled Cape Verdean employees and with sustainability at its core; it has avoided an estimated 55,000 tonnes of carbon emissions a year and averted the need to import 15 million litres of diesel a year.

Operating across four of Cape Verde's islands (Boa Vista, Sao Vicente, Sal and Santiago) and consisting of over 30 wind turbines, it has a total installed capacity of 25,5 megawatts, equivalent to around 20 percent of Cape Verde's energy needs.

To date, Cabeólica has generated over 300,000 MWh of clean wind power.

The project has transformed Cape Verde's access to electricity.

Prior to becoming operational, the islands suffered from chronic power shortages and were heavily dependent on imported oil, with only 2 percent of the country's energy needs being sourced from wind power. Today, Cape Verde benefits from a reliable and extended electricity grid. (*CAJ News* 26-02-2016)

ASSETS OWNED BY VALE IN MOZAMBIQUE LOSE US\$2.403 BILLION IN VALUE

Brazilian group Vale in its 2015 accounts took an impairment in the amount of US\$2.403 billion relating to coal assets in Mozambique, which are now worth US\$1.729 billion, according to the performance report.

The affect on the 2015 results of the impairment charges related to Mozambique, whose operation continues to lose US\$500 million a year, was the second largest for Vale, after a US\$3.46 billion impairment related to a nickel mining project in Canada at subsidiary Vale Newfoundland and Labrador. Overall, the group absorbed impairment charges in the amount of US\$8.569 billion, and the assets involved are now worth US\$14 billion.

The same performance report for 2015 stated that in Mozambique the group posted a loss of US\$508 million, similar to the US\$506 million recorded in 2014.

The Vale group has not yet closed a deal with Mitsui agreed in December 2014, under which the Japanese group would pay US\$450 million for 15 percent of the coal mine in Moatize and another US\$313 million for half of the 70 percent Vale controls in the Nacala Corridor. (26-02-2016)

CLOSING THE GENDER GAP: LESSONS FROM AFRICA

We hear that girls in Africa don't have the same opportunities as boys to get a decent education, that discrimination is shutting women out of the jobs and assets they need to provide a better standard of living for their families, that the benefits of economic growth are being wiped out because women are having too many children, and that thousands of women are dying in childbirth because they don't have access to basic healthcare.

While all of these things are true, they also hide something that you rarely hear – that Africa has been making significant progress and even has a thing or two to teach the rest of the world.

Between the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals in 1990, and the transition to the Sustainable Development Goals last year, the gap between girls' and boys' primary school enrollment was dramatically narrowed, the average rate of maternal mortality was almost halved, the ratio of women to men in the labor force increased so that it is now greater than in any other region of the world, and the average representation of women in national parliaments more than doubled —with Rwanda and Senegal topping the [list](#) of countries with the highest proportion of women in parliament (in Cabo Verde, gender parity at the cabinet level has prevailed for over a decade).

Part of the reason for this progress is that countries all across Africa have turned the depressing statistics with which we all too familiar into a surprising advantage. It is said that necessity is the mother

of invention. In this spirit, governments, researchers, and many others in Africa have set about generating evidence to determine what works and what does not work to address the many gender challenges that are preventing them from making even greater progress.

While economic development can be a major driving force in closing gaps between women and men, some issues are “sticky” and do not simply go away as countries get richer. An example of one of these sticky issues is occupational segregation. In many countries women and men work in different sectors and jobs simply because of their sex. This is clearly not efficient, yet this situation persists even in the wealthiest countries.

In Uganda, [research](#) has uncovered the factors that allow some women entrepreneurs to cross over into more profitable sectors, such as construction, that are usually dominated by men. As it turns out, women who have a male role model in their youth, especially a father, are more likely to cross-over into a male-dominated sector. Paradoxically teachers appear to discourage women from entering male-dominated sectors. The results of this research also suggest that a major obstacle to women crossing over is their lack of information on the higher profits they could earn in male-dominated sectors.

These results were echoed by a similar [study](#) in Ethiopia, which also highlighted the negative impact of sexual harassment and discrimination from customers who prefer to deal with a male business owner, and the difficulties women face in building up their professional networks in sectors with few other women. Both of these studies offer important lessons for policymakers around the world who wish to encourage and enable more women to move into sectors that can help improve the livelihoods of themselves and their families.

Some of the most pressing gender issues across Africa have an important inter-generational aspect. When mothers are educated, delay marriage and childbearing, participate in the labor market, and don't tolerate domestic violence, their daughters are more likely to grow up sharing those characteristics. We now have strong evidence that an effective way to address many of these issues is to support young women during adolescence - a critical juncture in their lives. In Uganda, the Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) program, implemented by the NGO BRAC, uses girl-only clubs to deliver vocational and 'life skills' training. The vocational training emphasized skills that would be useful for self-employment, as there are not many opportunities in the formal wage employment market. An [impact evaluation](#) of ELA shows that the girls in the program were 72 percent more likely to be engaged in income-generating activities and reported self-employment earnings that were three times greater compared to the baseline mean.

Impacts on control over their own bodies were equally impressive: girls in the program were 26 percent less likely to have a child, 58 percent less likely to be married or cohabiting, and 44 percent less likely to have had sex against their will over the previous 12 months. Girls also expressed their desire that their own daughters would have their first child 4.6 years later, highlighting the potential intergenerational and knowledge-sharing impacts of the project.

The impact of this type of program is of great significance for many African countries where a lack of progress reducing fertility rates has led to a ballooning youth population who lack access to sufficient economic opportunities to make a decent start in life.

Evidence from Africa also shows us that, sometimes, simply making the economy work better can disproportionately benefit women, even without an explicit focus on gender. Some recent experiences with land tenure reform provide one such example.

Improving tenure security can increase incentives to invest in land by giving land owners greater confidence that they will reap the benefits of whatever investments they make. Evidence suggests that the impacts of such improvements are greater for women, who tend to have less access to land and weaker tenure security. This is an important issue for economic growth in Africa, where so much economic activity is concentrated in the agriculture sector. In Rwanda, [improving land owners' tenure security](#) caused women to increase investments in their land by 19 percentage points, which was double the impact on men. This evidence could help policymakers to further improve agricultural productivity and food security.

That doesn't mean of course that we don't need laws and policies promoting gender equity. A country like Cabo Verde adopted a legal and institutional framework promoting gender equality back in 1975 guaranteeing equality and non-discrimination before the law. And quotas ensuring women's participation in political life are a major step forward. But it's time to move from speeches to actions with impact.

The fact that we are seeing a proliferation of such rigorous evidence on measures to address gender issues in Africa gives us great hope. Firstly, it signifies that we have moved well beyond the tendency to

include gender in development policy as a well-meaning token, and can now systematically develop rigorously tested solutions that work in practice. Secondly, it gives Africa the rare opportunity to lead the global policy dialogue on gender and speak for itself, by its own actions, rather than being spoken about, and prescribed to, by others.(World Bank 25-02-2016)

START OF NATURAL GAS EXPLORATION IN MOZAMBIQUE CREATES 820 JOBS

The approval of the project for development of the project to extract and liquify natural gas in Mozambique presented by Italian group ENI will create 820 jobs, according to the Mozambican Ministry of Mineral Resources and Energy.

This plan, recently approved by the Mozambique government will start to be executed this year by ENI East Africa, a subsidiary of the Italian group. The project will be located in Area 4 of the Rovuma basin and initially allow for extraction of 4.7 billion cubic feet of natural gas and production of 3.37 billion cubic feet of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Mozambican daily newspaper Notícias, citing a source from the ministry, wrote that 90 percent of the 820 jobs will be filled by Mozambican workers who will undergo training.

The discovery, made in May 2012 and set out in detail in 2013, proved the existence of 16 trillion cubic feet of high quality natural gas at a depth of over 2,000 metres and at a distance of 80 kilometers from Palma Bay, in the province of Cabo Delgado.

ENI is the Area 4 block operator with an indirect stake of 50 percent through ENI East Africa, which controls 70 percent of the block, the remaining partners are Portugal's Galp Energia and South Korean group Kogas and Mozambique's state oil and gas company ENH all with 10 percent each and the China National Petroleum Corporation with an indirect stake of 20 percent.(29-02-2016)

À MALABO, LES OPERATEURS FINANCIERS PLAIDENT POUR L'UNIFICATION BOURSIERE DANS LA CEMAC

Ils étaient près de 500 participants ce mercredi matin à la salle internationale de conférence de la cité panafricaine de Sipopo, à Malabo, capitale de la Guinée équatoriale, pour le lancement du forum sur le développement financier de l'Afrique centrale.

Durant cette cérémonie, présidée par Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, chef de l'Etat équato-guinéen et président en exercice de la Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale (Cemac), plusieurs intervenants ont dressé un diagnostic sévère des limitations du marché financier d'Afrique centrale.

Lucas Abaga Nchama, gouverneur de la Banque des États d'Afrique centrale, a regretté « l'étroitesse du marché financier dans la région, le nombre très limité des transactions boursières et le faible nombre d'entreprises cotées dans la zone Cemac ». Seules quatre entreprises sont cotées dans les six pays de la Cemac. Leur capitalisation atteint à peine 0,4 % du PIB des pays de la région, contre 10 % au Nigeria, 11 % dans la zone UEMOA, 36 % au Kenya, 48 % au Maroc et près de 250 % en Afrique du Sud.

Si dans son allocution, Raphaël Tung Nsue, président de la Commission de surveillance du marché financier de l'Afrique centrale (Cosumaf), a mis en lumière les progrès réalisés récemment, avec 419 milliards de F CFA mobilisés sur le marché obligataire entre 2008 et 2015 et la reconnaissance accrue dont bénéficie la Cosumaf à travers son adhésion à l'Organisation internationale des Commissions de valeurs, il a également reconnu les retards pris dans « le chantier d'intégration financière dans la région ».

Le gouverneur de la banque centrale appelle à des mesures courageuses

Au premier rang des blocages, l'existence de deux bourses au sein d'une même communauté économique et monétaire : la Douala Stock Exchange et la Bourse des valeurs mobilières de l'Afrique centrale (BVMAC) de Libreville, basées au Cameroun et au Gabon, deux pays membres de la Cemac. Pour Lucas Abaga Nchama, l'unique réponse qui respecte la « rationalité économique » serait la création d'une seule bourse commune, avec un seul régulateur et un seul dépositaire centrale ». Le gouverneur de la Cemac, à qui une mission de conciliation des bourses de Douala et Libreville avait été confiée en 2014, a appelé à « prendre très rapidement des mesures courageuses pour parvenir à cette unification ».

Cette recommandation est également l'une des propositions centrales du rapport remis par le cabinet Roland Berger après six mois d'investigation sur « le potentiel du marché financier régional de l'Afrique centrale et les mesures d'accompagnement », qui sera au cœur des discussions durant les deux journées du forum de Malabo.

Une période transitoire de trois ans

Signe du caractère sensible de cette question sur laquelle achoppent depuis plusieurs années les responsables publics et financiers de la région, Lucas Abaga Nchama a évoqué une solution « pragmatique et transitoire », qui prévoit de conserver les deux bourses durant une période de trois ans au cours de laquelle leurs réglementations seront harmonisées, les doubles cotations deviendront systématiques, les intermédiaires pourront opérer sur les deux places et les deux régulateurs fusionneront.

En conclusion de cette cérémonie d'ouverture, le président Obiang Nguema Mbasogo s'est félicité de la tenue de ce forum qui intervient « après des années de balbutiements » et qui est l'occasion « d'opérer un diagnostic rigoureux sur les blocages et les potentialités » du marché financier régional. (JA digital 24-02-2016)

UN PUMPS \$119M INTO GUINEA PROJECTS

The government of Guinea is set to benefit from a \$119 million funding under the United Nations Annual Work Plans (AWP), an official source told APA on Tuesday.

This financial support will go directly to the work of UN agencies active in the country.

They include the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which are responsible for implementing AWP's.

The UN System's representative in Guinea, Seraphine Wakana said it is a means by which the organization supports the Guinean government in promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

She said the AWP's are part of a broader context marked by the adoption in September 2015 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) approved by Guinea• .(APA 01-03-2016)

MOROCCO: SUSPENSION OF AGREEMENT, EU PROVIDES ASSURANCES

The EU reacted quickly at midday on Friday 26 February 2016 to a Moroccan decision from the previous day to "suspend all contact with European institutions, with the exception of planned exchanges" following a judgment by the EU General Court which, on 10 December 2015, questioned agricultural agreements with that country. The EU Ambassador in Rabat, Joy Rupert, was immediately summoned and he received notification of this decision.

In response, the Foreign Service's press office issued a statement on Friday recalling that the EU "responded quickly to the Court's decision." They added: "We are ready to provide additional clarifications and assurances to meet Morocco's concerns, so that contacts and cooperation can be fully restored as soon as possible".

"The EU and Morocco have developed for many years a sustainable partnership [...] Our belief is that a genuine partnership involves listening, sharing, solidarity and mutual respect between partners. Since December 2015 numerous contacts have been made on this matter at all levels between the EU and Morocco, and Morocco has been kept fully informed throughout the process, within the legal constraints that apply".

In conclusion, the EU's Foreign Service said: "We will assess as quickly as possible the implications of the current situation for our existing cooperation programmes." The case could become even more complicated because the Court is also dealing with a similar complaint, this time on the fisheries agreement. The similarly difficult issue of access for Moroccan fruit and vegetables, especially tomatoes, also remains highly sensitive. (EEAS 29-02-2016)

http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2016/160226_02_fr.htm

MEDITERRANEAN: MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE 'MEDGROUP'

Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretary General Fathallah Sijilmassi has been invited to participate in the 3rd Annual Ministerial Meeting of the 'Med Group' with the foreign ministers of Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain on 25 and 26 February 2016 in Limassol, Cyprus, the UfM said in a press release.

"Sijilmassi reaffirmed the UfM Secretariat's commitment to further contribute, with the constant development of its activities, to tackling the socio-economic root causes of the current security and migration challenges", the statement said. (UfM 29-02-2016)

<http://ufmsecretariat.org/ministerial-meeting-of-the-med-group-ufm-secretary-general-presents-state-of-play-and-perspectives-for-regional-integration-in-the-mediterranean/>

ETHIOPIA OUTS AMBITIOUS 2030 HIV/AIDS TARGET

The Ethiopian government on Tuesday announced an ambitious plan to prevent more than half a million AIDS-related deaths and stop up to 80,000 new HIV infections by 2020. An estimated 1.2 million people in Ethiopia are living with HIV/AIDS with the prevalence rate for adults at 2.4 percent.

According to the acting director of the Federal HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (HAPCO). Dr Alebachew Achamyeleh, the next five years are critical for Ethiopia in the fight against the disease.

"I believe Ethiopia is in a strong position to achieve the goal of ending HIV as a public health threat by 2030" Dr Achamyeleh said.

According to Dr Achamyeleh, Ethiopia has already exceeded its previous five-year target, having reduced new HIV infections from 0.28 percent in 2010 to 0.03 percent in 2015.

The plan was to reach 0.14 percent.

Dr Achamyeleh said HIV prevention activities since 2010 have focused mainly on people most at risk of infection.

He observed that activities had focused on identifying places and people with a high risk of HIV infection like hotspot areas for sex workers and long distance truck drivers, as well as addressing harmful practices like gender based violence.

Ethiopia has been working to address HIV in the last five years in the following areas: intensifying prevention; enhancing care, treatment and support; and generating and using strategic information.

Prevention activities have included programmes in schools, universities and youth centres to encourage young people to change their behavior related to sexual health. (APA 01-03-2016)

LIBERIA: UN INITIATES \$1M WASH PROJECT IN CLARA TOWN

The United Nations under its Ebola Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund in Liberia has begun the implementation of a \$1 million Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) project in Clara Town, a community in the Monrovia suburb of Bushrod Island.

The project is being implemented by UNICEF, ILO and UN-HABITAT Liberia country office in collaboration with the Monrovia City Corporation (MCC), the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) and the Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation (LWSC).

A two-day Stakeholders' Project Inception Workshop began Tuesday at the community Center in Clara Town.

Addressing the opening ceremony of the workshop, UN-HABITAT Head of Office in Liberia Antony Lamba said the intent of the workshop is to solicit the views of residents and to sensitize them on the need for them to take advantage as well as ownership of the project.

He noted, As part of the Liberia United Nations Country Team's post-Ebola recovery strategy, a proposal was prepared to implement a WASH project for the most vulnerable and affected urban slums in Monrovia as an important critical component of strengthening resilience and promoting economic stabilization.

The decision to host the project is based on the lessons learnt during the EVD response and the role WASH played in fighting the disease.

The Ebola Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund project is conceived within the framework of the joint UN programming approach and will be implemented through community based approaches with considerable emphasis on skills development in the targeted community.

The end result of the project will witness the provision of safe drinking water, and conducive sanitary environment as well as employment and business opportunities for Clara Town's 74,000 inhabitants.

Lamba has meanwhile disclosed the UN's desire to extend the project to other worst Ebola affected slum communities like West Point and New Kru Town, among others. The Clara Town project is the initial phase of the project, he said.(APA 01-03-2016)

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