



Save the Children



EU-AFRICA PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT: **Key Recommendations**

February 2022

Background

Ahead of the next EU-Africa Partnership Summit scheduled to take place on 17-18 February 2022, as both continents brace for turbulent times ahead, it has never been more important for the EU-Africa relationship to meaningfully deliver mutually beneficial outcomes that directly empower citizens and help them recover from the COVID crisis. Our own estimates for Africa suggest that an additional [33 million children](#) in this region may be pushed into poverty, reversing much of the progress made in the last decade. The COVID crisis has had devastating consequences for people across the European continent as well and [evidence](#) shows that children and their families have been further disadvantaged during the pandemic.

Save the Children welcomes the proposed partnership approach and the focus on investment in people and the planet. However, while investing in youth is a positive strategy for delivering better sustainable growth and jobs, **we regret that children are not specifically targeted, as they make up to 50% of the population in many African countries.** Investing in youth alone ignores key developmental phases in the lives of the future of the continent. **Children are the demographic with the potential to make the most transformative change in their lives, societies and economies** so there should be focused investment in them and **in strengthening the systems** that matter to them - namely, silencing the guns, health, nutrition, WASH, education, and social protection.

Save the Children welcomes the additional priorities highlighted in the Kigali Ministerial Meeting in October 2021, especially: the strong focus on **COVID-19 response and future pandemic preparedness**, and the call for robust initiatives to minimise the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and students, particularly girls, the vulnerable and hard-to-reach; the more **prominent focus on health**, calling for investment in the strengthening of health systems, inclusive social protection systems, UHC, access to quality health services, WASH and housing; **and the added-value recognized to the active participation of Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities** in the future EU-Africa partnership.



To ensure children are targeted and heard within the new EU-Africa partnership, Save the Children recommends the following:

1 COVID-19 and strengthening health systems



The COVID-19 crisis showcases just how important health is for our societies and economies. Political and public support for health around the world has never been higher. In many African countries, the Abuja Declaration commitment to reach 15% of budgetary spending on health is now more politically viable, even within the likely reduced fiscal space caused by the crisis.

Health inequality denies many African children access to essential services, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and care and, as shown in a [recent Save the Children report](#), COVID-19 impact on children's health and well-being is devastating. Lack of access to health and failure to address health determinants for women and girls means they are often the most left behind. Simply put, [health and well-being are empowering](#). **Better well-being and resilience achieved through health, food and nutrition security, and water, sanitation and hygiene should be part of the green partnership** and would enable a cross-sectoral approach to achieving the SDGs and Agenda 2063 through the Team Europe initiatives.

We recommend that suggested focuses on upgrading health system strengthening (HSS), combating disease outbreaks and Universal Health Coverage (UHC), reflected in the joint EU communication, and complementary references to health in the Council Conclusions (i.e. promoting the African pharmaceutical and medical industry, R&D for infectious diseases and providing equitable access to COVID-19 medical tools through the ACT-Accelerator) and in the [Joint Communique of the 2nd AU-EU Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting](#), be combined to deliver an ambitious EU-Africa partnership.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Improving equitable coverage of health services should be prioritised in the new EU-Africa Partnership.

It should focus on **strengthening health systems** and **building partnerships** across the region including by ensuring a fully funded ACT Accelerator. This would not only help to combat COVID and maintain gains in child survival but would strengthen essential programming for health systems and UHC, prepare the continent for future health crises through manufacturing and other capacity building, address determinants of health (such as WASH, nutrition, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)), and spur national leadership on domestic resource mobilisation for health.



2 Ensuring girls' rights are mainstreamed in the Partnership



Girls face distinct challenges based on their age and gender and their needs often fall through the cracks. Moreover, girls have been [disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic](#). Containment measures, including quarantine and school closures, are exposing girls to increased risks of gender-based violence and forcing girls and their families to adopt negative coping mechanisms such as sex for basic needs and child marriage.

Unfortunately, the Joint Communication and the Joint Communiqué from the October '21 Ministerial meeting also fell short of responding to their needs.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Gender equality should be a priority of the EU-Africa Partnership.

The EU-Africa partnership should specifically:

- Promote access to and completion of **quality, inclusive education** at all levels for all girls and young women, in safe learning environments, including in conflict and crises settings.
- Take measures to promote girls as **drivers of the digital transformation** and to address the digital gender divide, which is as relevant as ever due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Promote and allocate **adequate funding for universal access** for girls to youth-friendly health services, including SRHR and comprehensive sexuality education, that are equitable, accessible, affordable and needs-based, including in conflict and humanitarian settings, as well as for communities living in remote or rural areas.

For more detailed youth-led recommendations: see the [recommendations from the advocates from the European Week of Action for Girls](#).

3 Listening to children's voices



As the future of Africa will be led by African children and youth, they should have a say in matters that concern them. There are many representative Child Parliaments, young activists and youth leaders who are experienced in providing useful and innovative ideas to policy makers. They can have a real added value for the implementation of the EU-AU Partnership.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Safe, inclusive and meaningful participation of children should support the implementation of the new EU-Africa Partnership.

The EU-AU partnership should support decision-makers, from regional institutions to governments and local authorities, to **increase safe, inclusive and meaningful participation of children** at every step of the decision-making processes, and to translate their ideas into actions.

4 A holistic approach to peace, security and stability



The AU-EU Partnership should consider the specific vulnerabilities of children living in armed conflict, whose rights are more likely to be violated. Access to child protection, education, health including mental health/wellness and psychosocial support should be recognised as enablers of peace and stability in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

The Sahel Region currently faces an unprecedented crisis as escalating violence, rising levels of food insecurity, continued displacement, and the impacts of the COVID19 pandemic, all converge to create one of the worst humanitarian emergencies in the world right now. Despite efforts to tackle the complex

range of inter-connected challenges facing the Sahel, the region continues to be threatened by cyclical instability, state fragility, changing climate, and recurring humanitarian crises. Without addressing the root causes of insecurity and providing further investment in multidimensional solutions, an entire generation of children are at risk.

We welcome the EU's commitment to an integrated, human rights-based approach that addresses the root causes of instability. The AU-EU Partnership is an opportunity to develop a unified, cross-border and holistic plan to tackle peace and security issues in the Sahel, supported via quality funding. To ensure sustainability and efficiency for this plan, it must be inclusive of directly affected populations, civil society actors, women, youth and children in its design and implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The AU-EU Partnership should respond to the humanitarian, peace and security crises, notably the crisis in the Central Sahel.

The AU-EU Partnership should include a specific coordinated plan to respond to the humanitarian, peace and security crises, notably the crisis in the Central Sahel, by building on and strengthening existing integrated and inclusive responses with a focus on the **protection of civilians, access to basic services** such as education and health and **upholding the rights of children in armed conflict**. The important role of civil society in implementing programmes in hard-to-reach areas and strengthening local governance by enhancing community resilience should be recognised.



Save the Children believes that every child deserves a future. In Europe and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and be protected from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children's unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach.

We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

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