



Concept Note

Regional Webinars

Sustainable Governance Response to COVID-19 Pandemic in Africa: A Human Security Approach

**Department of Political Affairs, African Union Commission
&
International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance**

**Addis Ababa
Ethiopia**

September 2020



1. Introduction

The Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) are embarking on a continental project on 'Sustainable Governance Response to COVID-19 in Africa: A human security approach'. This project is essentially aimed at supporting Member States of the African Union in crafting effective policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in general, and specifically focusing on strengthening governance systems and institutions, and building societal resilience by placing human security at the center of the response to the pandemic. Regional studies have been commissioned by DPA and IDEA covering all the five regions of the continent, i.e. Central, East, North, Southern and West Africa. Regional research teams have completed regional reports and continue to submit monthly briefs. Regional webinars will also be organized between September and November 2020.

2. Context

Agenda 2063-The Africa We Want articulates the continental vision in very succinct terms as follows: an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena. Towards this vision, the African Union has a three-pronged programmatic mandate namely (a) democracy and governance, (b) peace and security and (c) socio-economic development and structural transformation. Given that one of the flagship projects of Agenda 2063 is silencing the guns, it is worth noting that the AU declared 2020 as the year of ***"Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development"***. Ending conflicts in Africa was supposed to be the single-most important focus of the African Union. But now that the continent faces a double jeopardy of violent conflict and COVID-19, the challenge has multiplied manifold.

Evidently, there is absolutely no way of silencing the guns in Africa durably and sustainably without balancing efforts across all the 55 Member States of the Union towards both human security and state security simultaneously while pursuing democratic governance at the same time. It is by focusing on democratic governance and human security that Africa is better positioned to address squarely the structural root causes of crises including pandemics such as COVID-19. At the heart of advancing democratic governance and human security rests the imperative for re-imagining state-society relations that place citizens at the centre of policy engineering. In advancing democratic governance and human security, a human rights approach must be embraced. There should be deliberate efforts towards inclusion and participation of women, girls and young people in governance processes. Therefore, gender and youth sensitive approaches should be embraced to ensure that COVID-19 does not disproportionately affect those who are most vulnerable or already marginalised and disadvantaged.

Since the declaration of COVID-19 as a Public Health Emergency of International concern in January 2020, and its subsequent spread across the continent, African Union Member States, like the rest of the world, have been faced with the daunting challenge of protecting people from being infected in a context of pre-existing socio-cultural and politico-economic challenges. The overall policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic by individual states in Africa has included, inter alia, lockdown, states of emergencies, states of disasters, curfews, travel restrictions, physical distancing, stringent hygiene regiment, quarantines and deployment of security forces (police and the military).

3. Justification for the Regional Webinars

DPA and IDEA plan to convene regional webinars covering all the five regions. A number of factors justify the convening of these regional webinars. First, the experts have completed their research and produced regional reports and the webinars will accord citizens to make their inputs. Secondly, inputs from key stakeholders will enrich reports. Finally, the webinars will provide a platform for engaging governments to adopt policy responses to COVID-19 that are sensitive to imperatives for promoting democratic and participatory governance as well as advancing human security.

4. Goal and Objectives

The goal of the regional webinars is to promote policy-relevant and development-oriented dialogue on sustainable governance response to COVID-19 which in turn enhances human security of citizens and leaving no one behind.

The three (3) specific objectives of the webinars are to:

- a) Provide a platform for research teams to share the findings of the regional reports with a wide range of stakeholders, including women and youth;
- b) Allow key stakeholders to debate and validate the research findings as contained in the regional reports; and
- c) Popularise the project and facilitate policy traction of the findings by governments as they craft responses to COVID-19.

6. Expected Outputs

The main output of the webinars will be five (5) workshop reports (Central, East, North, Southern and West Africa).

7. Thematic Focus Areas

As with the research project, the regional webinars will focus on five (5) key governance issues with a view to ensuring that policy responses to COVID-19 advance the human security of citizens as follows:

- Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law;

- Constitutionalism and Democracy;
- Public Service Delivery;
- Humanitarian assistance; and
- Accountability and responsiveness

8. Methodology

The webinars will use a simple methodology. They will be kicked off by opening statements from IDEA and DPA. DPA will present an overarching overview of the project. Regional research teams will present the key findings of the regional reports. This will be followed by general discussion and wrap up and closure of the meeting. Rapporteurs will capture the deliberations in the form of a report that will be shared with all participants in due course.

9. Coordination and Management Arrangements

The webinars will be coordinated by the Department of Political Affairs of the AUC and the International IDEA.

10. Time-Frames

The project will be implemented based on the following indicative action plan:

Region	Date	Product
Southern Africa	29 September	Report
East Africa	15 October	Report
West Africa	29 October	Report
North Africa	12 November	Report
Central Africa	26 November	Report

11. Contact Persons

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