



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERING PROGRAMME

AN INTRODUCTION FOR COLLABORATION WITH THE WORLD BANK

EUSL
CARE TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	2
2. The Rationale Behind SDEP	2
3. Objectives and Key Areas of Focus.....	3
4. Strategic Partnerships and Stakeholder Support.....	4
5. Proposal for a Unified Funding Envelope.....	6
6. The ECHO Platform and Infrastructure Solutions	6
7. Monitoring, Governance, and Accountability through GSIA.....	7
8. Measurable Impact and Long-Term Sustainability	8
9. Call for Collaboration and Investment	9
10. Conclusion	10
11. Mission Statement.....	11
12. Final Words	11

Social Development and Empowerment Programme

*A Comprehensive Proposal for Transformative Development in the COMESA Region
Submitted to the World Bank Group*

1. Executive Summary

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) is an integrated development initiative aimed at addressing critical challenges in food security, vocational training, infrastructure, and governance across the COMESA region. SDEP proposes a unified funding envelope that combines resources to tackle multiple development challenges under one cohesive framework, aligning closely with the World Bank's mission to reduce poverty, promote shared prosperity, and build sustainable, resilient economies.

SDEP brings together the strengths of key regional and international stakeholders, including the backing of ACTESA/COMESA, the EFFORT initiative from Sweden implemented in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda with a rollout plan in 14 more countries, and public support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The SDEP project focuses on driving sustainable development through modernized agriculture, workforce development, and scalable infrastructure solutions. By integrating the ECHO platform, SDEP provides renewable energy, water management, and waste processing systems that are adaptable to both rural and urban settings.

SDEP will also create the Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA), which will oversee governance, trade agreements, and public-private partnerships (PPP), ensuring compliance with international standards. In addition, FlexSus, a real-time monitoring platform, will provide continuous data on the programme's progress, ensuring transparency and accountability.

This proposal aligns with the World Bank's priorities, particularly in the areas of poverty alleviation, climate resilience, and sustainable infrastructure development. By investing in SDEP, the World Bank will support a programme that contributes to multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while creating scalable solutions that can be replicated beyond the COMESA region.

2. The Rationale Behind SDEP

The COMESA region is grappling with a complex set of development challenges, including food insecurity, inadequate vocational training, and a severe lack of infrastructure. These issues are deeply interconnected, and addressing them in isolation often leads to inefficiencies and limited impact. For the region to achieve sustainable growth and resilience, there is a need for an integrated approach that tackles these challenges holistically.

Existing development funding models, including those supported by the World Bank, have often focused on specific sectors, such as agriculture or energy, in isolation. While these interventions have been impactful, they frequently miss the opportunity to create synergies between sectors, which are essential for long-term development. For example, efforts to improve agricultural productivity are limited without corresponding investments in water management, energy access, and vocational training.

SDEP addresses this gap by proposing a unified development model that integrates food security, workforce development, and infrastructure. The programme is designed to leverage the interconnections between these sectors, ensuring that progress in one area supports and accelerates progress in others. By harmonizing agricultural policies, deploying renewable energy solutions, and providing vocational training, SDEP creates a sustainable ecosystem that drives economic growth and resilience.

For the World Bank, this programme offers a unique opportunity to support a development model that not only addresses the immediate needs of the region but also contributes to long-term sustainability and **climate resilience**. By investing in SDEP, the World Bank can build on its existing efforts in the region while introducing a scalable framework that can be adapted to other regions facing similar challenges.

3. Objectives and Key Areas of Focus

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) has been designed with a clear set of objectives aimed at addressing the critical development needs of the COMESA region. These objectives align directly with the World Bank's priorities, particularly in relation to sustainable development, poverty reduction, and infrastructure resilience. Each objective is linked to the broader goal of driving long-term, scalable impact across multiple sectors.

a. Food Security and Agricultural Productivity

SDEP's primary objective is to enhance food security across the COMESA region by improving agricultural productivity and resilience. This will be achieved through the integration of ACTESA/COMESA's five flagship programmes, which are:

- COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP): Facilitates access to quality seeds through harmonized regulations, helping farmers improve crop yields.
- COMESA Bioprotectants Harmonisation Programme (COMBIHAP): Promotes the safe and efficient use of bioprotectants to protect crops from pests and diseases in a sustainable manner.
- COMESA Biosafety and Biotechnology Implementation Plan (COMBIP): Ensures the safe application of biotechnology to enhance agricultural productivity and food security while adhering to biosafety standards.
- COMESA Fertiliser Regional Programme (COMFREP): Improves access to quality fertilizers through harmonized regional policies, ensuring soil health and better crop outcomes.
- COMESA EAC Horticultural Accelerator (CEHA): Supports the growth and competitiveness of the horticulture sector, improving market access for regional farmers and increasing trade opportunities.

By harmonizing regulations around seeds, bioprotectants, biotechnology, fertilizers, and horticultural practices through these programmes, SDEP will drive improvements in agricultural efficiency, productivity, and sustainability.

Through this coordinated approach, SDEP aligns with World Bank's core goals of boosting agricultural productivity to enhance food security and economic development. By improving access to key inputs like seeds, fertilizers, and bioprotectants, SDEP will help farmers increase yields, reduce vulnerability to climate change, and expand their access to regional and global markets.

b. Vocational Training and Workforce Development

Another key focus of SDEP is the development of a skilled workforce that can drive the region's economic transformation. By offering comprehensive vocational training programmes, SDEP aims to address the significant skills gap in sectors such as agriculture, energy, and technology. The programme will equip local populations with the knowledge and skills they need to participate in and benefit from the region's growing economy.

This objective aligns with the World Bank's commitment to human capital development, particularly in terms of building a skilled workforce capable of sustaining long-term economic growth. By partnering with leading academic institutions such as Uppsala University, Lund University, Makerere University and multiple other high ranking universities, SDEP ensures that its vocational training initiatives are rooted in the latest research and best practices.

c. Infrastructure Development through the ECHO Platform

At the heart of SDEP's infrastructure strategy is the ECHO platform, a modular system designed to provide renewable energy, water management, and waste processing solutions to both rural and urban communities. ECHO's adaptability ensures that infrastructure investments are tailored to the specific needs of each community, allowing for scalable development across diverse contexts.

By deploying the ECHO platform, SDEP addresses the World Bank's focus on climate resilience and sustainable infrastructure development. The platform will provide renewable energy solutions that reduce reliance on non-renewable sources, while its water management systems will help address the critical issue of water scarcity. These infrastructure solutions are key to building more resilient communities that can thrive in the face of environmental and economic challenges.

d. Governance and Trade Agreements

The governance framework for SDEP will be managed by the Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA), which will ensure that the programme operates in compliance with international trade standards and effectively manages public-private partnerships (PPP). GSIA will play a critical role in coordinating trade agreements related to the agricultural products and services generated by SDEP, ensuring that the region's farmers and businesses have access to both regional and global markets.

This governance structure aligns with the World Bank's focus on good governance and institutional capacity building, ensuring that all programme activities are transparent, accountable, and compliant with global standards. By providing strong oversight, GSIA ensures that SDEP will deliver sustainable, long-term benefits to the region while contributing to the World Bank's broader development goals.

4. Strategic Partnerships and Stakeholder Support

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) is built on a foundation of strong partnerships with key regional and international stakeholders, ensuring both the credibility and sustainability of its objectives. These partnerships provide the technical expertise, institutional support, and governance structures required to drive the programme's success.

ACTESA/COMESA's Flagship Programmes

A central pillar of SDEP is the integration of ACTESA/COMESA's five flagship programmes, which are vital to addressing food security and agricultural productivity in the region. These programmes include:

- COMESA Seed Harmonisation Programme (COMSHIP): Ensures access to quality seeds through harmonized regulations, improving productivity for farmers.
- COMESA Bioprotectants Harmonisation Programme (COMBIHAP): Promotes sustainable pest management through the safe use of bioprotectants.
- COMESA Biotechnology and Biosafety Implementation Plan (COMBIP): Facilitates the safe use of biotechnology to enhance agricultural production while maintaining biosafety.
- COMESA Fertiliser Harmonisation Programme (COMFREP): Improves soil health and crop outcomes by harmonizing access to quality fertilizers.
- COMESA EAC Horticultural Accelerator (CEHA): Strengthens the horticultural sector by improving market access and competitiveness for regional farmers.

These programmes ensure that SDEP is aligned with the region's agricultural priorities, contributing to both food security and economic growth. By integrating these initiatives, SDEP addresses core agricultural challenges with a focus on long-term sustainability and climate resilience.

EFFORT Initiative and UNDP Support

The EFFORT initiative plays a critical role in SDEP's higher education and infrastructure components, particularly in building local capacity for sustainable development. Backed by UNDP, EFFORT has gained international recognition for its work in promoting innovation and sustainability. However, recent shifts in government funding decisions, particularly the withdrawal of SIDA's financial support, left EFFORT in a vulnerable position.

Through its merger with SDEP, EFFORT benefits from broader financial and technical backing, securing its future and expanding its impact. This partnership also creates the potential for renewed engagement with SIDA, as the programme's goals align with their long-term vision for development in the region.

International Academic and Technical Contributions

SDEP is also supported by leading academic institutions via EFFORT, including Uppsala University, Lund University, and Makerere. SDEP also has its own support from multiple other high-ranking universities, including the CREAM consortium, which contributes to both the vocational training and workforce development components, as well as higher education. These institutions bring cutting-edge research and technical expertise, ensuring that training programmes are designed to meet the region's specific needs and are informed by the latest global best practices.

By leveraging these diverse partnerships, SDEP ensures that it operates with both regional relevance and international standards, contributing to the World Bank's goals of sustainable and inclusive development.

5. Proposal for a Unified Funding Envelope

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme proposes the creation of a unified funding envelope, designed to address the interconnected nature of the challenges facing the COMESA region. Traditional funding models often target specific sectors, such as agriculture, energy, or vocational training, without recognizing the potential synergies between them. This segmented approach can limit the effectiveness of development efforts by failing to capture the cross-sectoral linkages essential for sustainable growth.

Rationale for a Unified Funding Envelope

SDEP's integrated approach offers the World Bank an opportunity to fund a programme that addresses multiple development challenges under one cohesive framework. The unified funding envelope will ensure that resources are allocated efficiently across sectors, maximizing the programme's impact. By addressing agricultural productivity, vocational training, infrastructure, and governance simultaneously, SDEP ensures that improvements in one area support progress in others.

This funding model aligns with the World Bank's focus on sustainable development, enabling the institution to support a programme that drives long-term economic growth, poverty reduction, and climate resilience across multiple sectors.

Key Areas of Investment

The unified funding envelope will cover the following areas:

1. **Agriculture and Food Security:** Investments will be directed toward improving food security and agricultural resilience through the harmonization of seed regulations, bioprotectants, biotechnology, and fertilizers. The development of the horticulture sector through CEHA will also be supported to boost regional trade and market access.
2. **Vocational Training and Workforce Development:** SDEP will invest in developing vocational training programmes that equip local populations with the skills needed to drive economic growth, particularly in sectors like agriculture, technology, and energy. These programmes will be informed by the latest research from leading academic institutions, ensuring their relevance and effectiveness.
3. **Infrastructure Development:** Resources will be allocated to deploying the ECHO platform, providing renewable energy, water management, and waste processing solutions to communities across the region. This infrastructure is critical to enabling the region to achieve long-term resilience and economic development.
4. **Governance and Trade Agreements:** Funding will also cover the operational costs of GSIA, which will manage the governance and oversight of trade agreements, public-private partnerships (PPP), and compliance with international standards.

This unified funding envelope ensures that the World Bank's investment is deployed in a way that supports holistic, sustainable development, driving measurable outcomes across multiple sectors.

6. The ECHO Platform and Infrastructure Solutions

At the core of SDEP's infrastructure strategy is the ECHO platform, an innovative, modular system designed to provide renewable energy, water management, and waste processing solutions to both

rural and urban communities. ECHO addresses some of the most pressing infrastructure challenges in the COMESA region, contributing to climate resilience and sustainable development.

Renewable Energy and Resource Management

The ECHO platform integrates solar energy systems, providing reliable, renewable power to communities with limited or no access to electricity. This supports the World Bank's goals of climate action and energy access, while reducing the region's reliance on non-renewable energy sources.

In addition to energy, ECHO provides water storage and management solutions, addressing the region's critical water scarcity issues. These systems ensure that water is stored and distributed efficiently, supporting both agricultural production and domestic needs. By improving water management, ECHO contributes to the World Bank's focus on building resilient infrastructure capable of withstanding the impacts of climate change.

Sustainable Waste Management

ECHO's integrated waste processing systems help communities manage waste sustainably, reducing environmental impact and contributing to improved public health outcomes. This component aligns with the World Bank's broader goals of environmental sustainability and sustainable cities.

Scalability and Adaptability

The modular design of ECHO allows it to be deployed across a variety of contexts, from small rural communities to larger urban centers. This scalability ensures that SDEP can meet the diverse infrastructure needs of the region while maintaining efficiency and adaptability. By providing communities with access to renewable energy and sustainable water and waste systems, ECHO creates the foundation for long-term economic growth and resilience.

By investing in the ECHO platform, the World Bank will be supporting a programme that directly contributes to its mission of building climate-resilient infrastructure and ensuring sustainable development for all.

7. Monitoring, Governance, and Accountability through GSIA

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) places a premium on governance, accountability, and transparency, ensuring that the programme delivers measurable results aligned with global best practices. To achieve this, SDEP will be governed by the Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA), which is responsible for oversight, managing public-private partnerships (PPP), and ensuring compliance with international trade and development standards. This governance framework will ensure that all activities within SDEP adhere to both regional and international regulations.

GSIA's Role in Governance

GSIA will provide strategic oversight of SDEP, ensuring:

- **Public-private partnership (PPP) coordination:** GSIA will facilitate collaboration between public and private sectors to enhance the programme's reach, innovation, and financial backing.
- **Management of trade agreements:** GSIA will ensure that agricultural and other products produced under SDEP can access both regional and global markets through harmonized trade policies.

- **Compliance with international standards:** GSIA will manage regulatory frameworks, ensuring all activities comply with regional agreements and international guidelines on sustainable development, trade, and environmental practices.

This governance structure aligns with the World Bank's focus on good governance, fostering transparency, accountability, and efficiency across all sectors of the programme. GSIA will act as the primary mechanism to guarantee that SDEP adheres to the highest standards of governance, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and that programme activities deliver sustainable, long-term outcomes.

Real-Time Monitoring through FlexSus

SDEP's implementation will be closely monitored using FlexSus, a real-time monitoring and evaluation platform that tracks the programme's progress across all sectors. FlexSus allows for continuous data collection and analysis, ensuring that the World Bank and other stakeholders have full visibility into the programme's operations. Key areas of monitoring include:

- **Agricultural productivity**, such as crop yields, water usage, and fertilizer distribution, providing real-time data on food security.
- **Infrastructure performance**, including the efficiency of renewable energy systems, water management, and waste processing through the ECHO platform.
- **Workforce development**, tracking the vocational training programmes and their impact on local employment and economic growth.

The real-time insights provided by FlexSus enable quick adjustments to ensure the programme remains on track and delivers the intended results. By embedding this monitoring framework, SDEP offers the World Bank complete transparency and continuous accountability.

Third-Party Audits and Financial Accountability

In addition to real-time monitoring, third-party audits will be conducted regularly to verify financial and operational performance. Independent auditors will review all aspects of SDEP, ensuring that resources are used effectively, and the programme is delivering measurable outcomes. These audits will cover:

- **Financial management**, ensuring that funds are allocated and utilized in line with the programme's goals.
- **Operational efficiency**, verifying that the activities carried out across sectors are aligned with the strategic objectives of SDEP and the World Bank.

This multi-tiered governance and monitoring approach guarantees that SDEP operates transparently and efficiently, offering a strong accountability framework to the World Bank and all stakeholders involved.

8. Measurable Impact and Long-Term Sustainability

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) is designed to deliver tangible, measurable results that align with the World Bank's development goals. By integrating food security, vocational training, infrastructure, and governance, SDEP offers a powerful framework for driving long-term, sustainable development across the COMESA region.

Expected Outcomes

The expected impacts of SDEP are wide-ranging, including:

- **Enhanced agricultural productivity**, leading to improved food security for millions in the COMESA region. By harmonizing regulations for seeds, bioprotectants, and fertilizers, and through the horticultural accelerator, SDEP will help farmers increase their yields and access new markets, reducing reliance on food imports.
- **Job creation and skills development**, through comprehensive vocational training programmes that equip local populations with the skills they need to contribute to and benefit from the region's growing economy. This will create a sustainable workforce capable of driving long-term economic growth.
- **Resilient infrastructure**, provided through the ECHO platform, which will deliver renewable energy, water management, and waste processing solutions to both rural and urban communities. This infrastructure is critical for building climate resilience and ensuring long-term sustainability in the face of environmental challenges.
- **Increased trade and market access**, facilitated by GSIA's management of trade agreements and partnerships. By improving market access for farmers and businesses, SDEP will contribute to regional and global economic integration.

These outcomes will contribute directly to the World Bank's mission of poverty reduction, sustainable development, and shared prosperity. SDEP is not only designed to deliver immediate improvements in agricultural productivity and infrastructure but also to create a foundation for long-term economic resilience and sustainable growth.

Scalability Beyond COMESA

SDEP's model is designed to be scalable, making it adaptable to other regions facing similar challenges. By integrating agriculture, vocational training, and infrastructure under a unified framework, SDEP can be replicated in other developing regions across Africa and beyond. This scalability positions SDEP as a potential global model for sustainable development, contributing to the World Bank's broader goal of building resilient economies worldwide.

Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

SDEP is aligned with several key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including:

- **SDG 2: Zero Hunger**, by improving agricultural productivity and ensuring access to quality food.
- **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**, through job creation and skills development.
- **SDG 13: Climate Action**, by deploying renewable energy and climate-resilient infrastructure through the ECHO platform.

By supporting SDEP, the World Bank will be contributing directly to these global goals, furthering its commitment to creating sustainable, inclusive growth in the COMESA region.

9. Call for Collaboration and Investment

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) presents a unique opportunity for the World Bank to partner in a transformative development initiative that addresses the interconnected

challenges of food security, workforce development, and infrastructure in the COMESA region. Through this partnership, the World Bank can make a lasting impact by supporting a programme that not only aligns with its strategic goals but also delivers measurable, long-term results.

Invitation to Partner

We invite the World Bank to collaborate with SDEP by providing financial support and governance oversight through the unified funding envelope proposed in this document. This envelope ensures that the World Bank's resources will be allocated efficiently across sectors, maximizing the programme's impact and driving long-term, sustainable growth in the region.

Strategic Role of the World Bank

As a key partner, the World Bank will play a critical role in shaping the success of SDEP. By providing financial backing, technical expertise, and governance support, the World Bank will help ensure that the programme delivers tangible outcomes across multiple sectors. The partnership will also add further credibility to the programme, attracting additional investment and collaboration from other international development institutions.

10. Clarification on SDEP's Structure and Funding Approach

SDEP is structured as a dual-package initiative. The first package is SDEP the project itself, which integrates collaborations between ACTESA, EFFORT, EUSL, and other strategic partners. This package focuses on sustainable development across the COMESA region, with key areas like agriculture, technology, and skill development.

The second part of SDEP is the funding package, which is designed to support both COMESA member states and the individual programmes that fall under the ACTESA umbrella. This means that it is not EUSL directly applying for funding, but rather the SDEP project, along with COMESA, acting on behalf of their member states. COMESA's role is critical in securing resources for the specific needs of its member countries, ensuring that the funding reaches the right sectors and communities.

Next Steps

We are prepared to engage in further discussions with the World Bank to refine the details of the funding structure, governance mechanisms, and implementation timeline for SDEP. By working together, we can ensure that the programme meets its ambitious goals of sustainable development, poverty reduction, and climate resilience across the COMESA region.

11. Conclusion

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) represents a comprehensive, integrated solution to the pressing challenges of food security, workforce development, and infrastructure in the COMESA region. With strong stakeholder backing, robust governance mechanisms, and scalable infrastructure solutions, SDEP is uniquely positioned to deliver long-term, sustainable development.

By partnering with SDEP, the World Bank has the opportunity to make a significant contribution to regional stability and growth while advancing its broader mission of poverty alleviation, sustainable development, and shared prosperity. We look forward to the opportunity to collaborate with the World Bank in realizing this vision.

12. Mission Statement

At the heart of EUSL's Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) is the belief that real, transformative change happens when key stakeholders unite around a shared vision of progress. By bringing together the agricultural innovations of ACTESA's flagship programmes, the capacity-building and sustainability focus of the EFFORT initiative, and the operational strength of SDEP, we have created a comprehensive framework capable of addressing the most pressing development challenges faced by the COMESA region.

Through strategic collaboration with a committed financial partner, EUSL, via SDEP, ACTESA, and EFFORT, is poised to deliver lasting impact across multiple sectors. Together, we will drive food security, foster vocational training and workforce development, and implement sustainable infrastructure solutions that not only lift communities out of poverty but also lay the foundation for long-term economic resilience.

With the support of a forward-thinking funder like World Bank, this partnership can truly make a difference—transforming the lives of millions, creating opportunities for prosperity, and building a future that is sustainable, inclusive, and equitable.

We are committed to creating a lasting legacy of growth, and together, with the right partners, we can turn this vision into reality.

13. Final Words

As we move forward into a future defined by both challenges and opportunities, the need for bold, integrated solutions has never been greater. The Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) represents a blueprint for sustainable growth, one that combines the power of ACTESA's flagship agricultural programmes, the innovative drive of the EFFORT initiative, and the far-reaching potential of EUSL to create meaningful change across the COMESA region.

This document lays out the path to long-term, sustainable development, but the true impact of this initiative can only be realized through a strategic partnership with an organization committed to these shared goals. Whether it is addressing food security, driving climate resilience, or building human capacity through vocational training, SDEP's success will ultimately depend on the collective efforts of its stakeholders and a visionary funder who understands the value of investing in the future.

Together, we can ensure that the seeds of this programme grow into a legacy of prosperity and stability for the region, creating opportunities for generations to come. We look forward to the next steps in this journey and the chance to partner in building a sustainable, inclusive future for all.