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MULTI-ACTOR COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERING PROGRAMME

PREPARED BY

EUSL AB

Care to Change the World

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SDEP-MACF

Social Development and Empowerment Programme – Multi-Actor Cooperation Framework

Executive Summary

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme – Multi-Actor Cooperation Framework (SDEP-MACF) represents a comprehensive and strategically anchored platform for delivering sustainable, inclusive, and scalable development across the COMESA region. The framework is designed to operate over a seven-year rollout and upscaling phase, followed by a long-term operational period of 43 years, culminating in the year 2074 — in full alignment with the Agenda for Social Equity 2074, our shared 50-year vision.

DEP-MACF is a coordinated governance architecture that unites leading actors from the public, private, academic, and civil society sectors into a coherent and operationally effective system. Its ambition is to simultaneously implement high-impact projects, build institutional capacity, and reshape regional development cooperation into a more equitable and self-sustaining model.

Foundational Members of SDEP-MACF

SDEP-MACF is built upon a strong and pragmatic alliance of institutions, each bringing a specific competence, mandate, and network into the framework:

- **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)** – serving as the *entry point and diplomatic lead* into Sweden’s coordinated international development efforts.
- **AECF Africa** – a long-standing implementation partner to SIDA, with extensive experience in private-sector-based development across Africa. AECF will lead certain programme components and serve as a primary vehicle for placing European Social Label (EUSL) as a subcontracted implementation partner where applicable.
- **Swedfund** – Sweden’s development finance institution, contributing financial tools and blended capital solutions to leverage public-private investments.
- **Business Sweden** – responsible for engaging the Swedish and international private sector, supporting market access, trade, and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- **Exportkreditnämnden (EKN)** – the Swedish Export Credit Corporation, offering credit guarantees and export finance to support infrastructure, green energy, and sustainable value chains.
- **African Development Bank (AfDB)** – an interested multilateral partner, anticipated to co-anchor climate mitigation and agricultural transformation financing and act as a structuring entity in regional implementation.
- **European Social Label (EUSL)** – the coordinating entity and strategic driver behind SDEP, responsible for stakeholder integration, concept deployment, and alignment with the broader framework of **Charity as a Business**, sustainability innovation, and equity governance.

Strategic Purpose and Outlook

SDEP-MACF is designed as a platform for transition and transformation. While its operational starting point is the Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP), it is constructed to:

- **Organically evolve into the ACTESA Power Play** – a region-wide project and funding package under COMESA, scheduled for formal launch in January 2027.
- Feed directly into the Global Social Equity Alliance (GSEA), the long-term institutional custodian of the five pillars of the Power Play.
- Operate under the regulatory and compliance structure provided by the Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA), our Public-Private Partnership (PPP) governance entity.

Together, these entities form a mature, flexible, and long-range platform for Africa-Europe cooperation, capable of implementing development strategies that are locally owned, internationally aligned, and globally respected.

The goal is not merely to launch projects, but to build systems. SDEP-MACF enables the emergence of institutions, policies, and networks that will remain active and adaptive far beyond individual project cycles.

Introduction

The Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP) is an inclusive, continent-wide initiative aimed at accelerating Africa's transformation through integrated action in food security, climate resilience, infrastructure development, vocational training, and social entrepreneurship. Developed as a flagship program under EUSL's project umbrella of African Unity 2063, and in direct alignment with both the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the EUSL's emerging framework of Agenda for Social Equity 2074 (Agenda 2074), SDEP is designed as a replicable and scalable model that bridges policy and practice, and unites local relevance with global ambition.

SDEP is grounded in a multi-sectoral approach that integrates public, private, academic, and civil society actors within a single, coherent ecosystem. Its model enables countries to define their own needs and pathways for development, while maintaining interoperability with a broader continental vision. The program emphasizes inclusion, localization, and data-driven decision-making, supported by digital infrastructure and embedded governance tools.

To realize its full potential, SDEP requires the structured engagement of multiple institutional partners who can co-invest, co-design, and co-implement its pillars across diverse African territories. This document proposes the establishment of a formal SDEP Multi-Actor Cooperation Framework (MACF), centered around a coalition of strategic partners including the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Swedfund, Exportkreditnämnden (EKN), Business Sweden, AECF Africa, and European Social Label (EUSL).

Together, these actors represent a unique and timely opportunity to forge a new generation of partnerships—those that are not only project-based, but system-oriented, risk-balanced, and future-aligned.

2. Strategic Rationale

2.1 Development in Convergence: Food, Climate, and Youth

Africa faces a trilemma of interconnected challenges—food insecurity, climate vulnerability, and underutilized youth potential. The continent hosts 60% of the world's arable land, yet remains a net food importer. It holds the youngest population globally, yet struggles with systemic underemployment. Climate shocks disproportionately affect African communities, while mitigation and

adaptation funding remains deeply insufficient. These challenges are not isolated—they reinforce each other, creating cycles of poverty, migration, and socio-political instability.

SDEP presents a counter-cycle: a system of empowerment that targets agricultural transformation, green infrastructure, and human capital development simultaneously. It is purpose-built to integrate financing, capacity-building, and innovation in a harmonized structure, and to do so in close collaboration with institutions that bring both technical depth and institutional legitimacy.

2.2 The Case for Multi-Actor Collaboration

A project of SDEP's scale cannot be implemented in isolation. Its success requires a multi-actor architecture that brings together public development agencies, impact investors, export enablers, and regional financial institutions.

The involvement of SIDA, Swedfund, EKN, and Business Sweden ensures access to development finance, private capital, export support, and business matchmaking. AfDB contributes deep contextual expertise, sovereign partnerships, and large-scale climate investment platforms. EUSL together with AECF Africa provide governance infrastructure, technical implementation, and local connectivity across African countries.

This partnership of institutions allows SDEP to function not as a project, but as a continental mechanism for equitable development—scalable, traceable, and repeatable.

2.3 Pan-African Power Play: A Strategic Opening for the Continent

The formation of this framework is more than a technocratic alignment—it is a geopolitical proposition. Through SDEP, Africa has the opportunity to leverage its collective agency, moving beyond dependency-based models and towards a vision of mutual power, reciprocal trade, and dignified development.

For African governments, this cooperation signals access not only to capital and technology, but to long-term partnerships that respect ownership, sovereignty, and value creation on African terms.

For Sweden and its associated institutions, it represents a shift from traditional aid to transformative co-investment, wherein impact is coupled with sustainable return, and where social inclusion becomes a matter of strategic relevance. The SDEP framework thus becomes a Pan-African Power Play—one that acknowledges Africa not merely as a beneficiary, but as a co-architect of the world's sustainable future.

3. Core Partners and Institutional Roles

The successful realization of SDEP requires a constellation of high-capacity, value-aligned institutions with the mandate, tools, and networks to operate at the intersection of policy, implementation, and investment. Each partner contributes specific capacities, while together forming a *complementary whole* capable of addressing Africa's structural development gaps in a coherent and multi-layered manner.

3.1 SIDA – The Entry Point to Sweden's Development Cooperation Consortium

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) plays a pivotal and strategic role in the SDEP framework, acting as the official entry point to a broader Swedish development cooperation consortium composed of five key institutions. This informal group—referred to here as the *Swedish Development Quintet*—includes:

- **SIDA** – bilateral development cooperation

- **Swedfund** – impact-oriented development finance
- **Exportkreditnämnden (EKN)** – export credit guarantees
- **Business Sweden** – trade and investment facilitation
- **(Fifth Partner)** – to be confirmed in later documentation (SEK?)

SIDA's mandate and experience allow it to anchor the engagement with African governments and institutions, support institutional capacity-building, and align development priorities with Sweden's strategic policy frameworks. Within SDEP, SIDA is envisioned to convene and coordinate its quintet partners, facilitating their respective contributions in a unified structure aligned with both African needs and Swedish competencies.

By serving as the central interlocutor, SIDA also ensures coherence between public funding, export facilitation, and private sector participation—providing a rare and valuable institutional bridge between development objectives and commercial mechanisms.

3.2 AECF Africa – Implementation Partner and Platform Bridge

The Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF Africa) is a well-established implementation partner to Sida and a trusted regional actor with a robust presence across multiple African countries. Known for its innovative work in supporting inclusive business models, access to energy, climate-smart agriculture, and gender equality, AECF Africa operates at the very nexus of enterprise development, donor engagement, and rural transformation.

Within the SDEP framework, AECF Africa is envisioned as both:

- A direct implementation partner in designated countries and thematic areas (e.g., agriculture, MSME support, energy access); and
- A contracting platform through which European Social Label (EUSL) can be formally integrated as a technical subcontractor, particularly in domains such as inclusive innovation, monitoring systems, and the “Charity as a Business” deployment model.

This dual role allows AECF Africa to maintain its longstanding operational mandate while expanding its ecosystem with novel tools and methods introduced by EUSL. Importantly, this structure avoids duplication of roles and facilitates alignment between institutional mandates, technical competencies, and local relevance.

AECF Africa's pre-existing framework agreements with Sida further enable accelerated deployment and reduce the need for extensive due diligence pathways, thereby enhancing SDEP's ability to scale quickly without compromising governance integrity.

4. Cooperation Framework and Strategic Growth Pathway

4.1 Structure for Cooperation and Execution

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) will be governed by a multi-tiered cooperation architecture that ensures inclusive governance, operational efficiency, donor confidence, and local relevance. The architecture is designed to:

- Anchor execution in African institutions and expertise;
- Utilize European innovation and social business models (via EUSL);

- Channel development funding through trusted institutions (e.g., SIDA and AECF Africa);
- Offer structured pathways for investment, monitoring, and knowledge transfer.

The core structure includes the following levels:

Layer	Function
Strategic Governance	Anchored by SIDA and participating COMESA governments, controlled by EUSL
Programmatic Implementation	AECF Africa as primary regional platform, with EUSL and others as subcontractors where applicable
Technical and Innovation Hub	EUSL provides Charity as a Business models, social innovation, vocational training and mechanical and electrical tools
Country-Level Delivery	Local implementation through zoned project clusters under national governments
Monitoring & Advocacy	Independent oversight, advocacy, and citizen engagement via future Council for Global Social Advocacy

Funding is expected to follow a **hybrid stream model**:

- **Bilateral Development Aid** – through SIDA and other aligned agencies;
- **Blended Finance** – via Swedfund, development financing institutions, and private capital mobilized through Business Sweden, development financing institutions and other impact investors;
- **Export and Technology Access** – through credit facilities (EKN) and business platforms.

This layered model allows SDEP to be highly adaptive, modular across nations, and scalable in both intensity and coverage.

4.2 From SDEP to Pan-African Systems: The Organic Expansion Model

While SDEP constitutes the anchor initiative, it is designed with organic expansion as a core feature. The architecture anticipates its evolution through multiple, interconnected expansions, each grounded in African priorities and aligned with global equity frameworks.

The expansion pathway includes:

1. **SDEP Implementation and National Empowerment Zones (Years 1–7)**: Focused on the COMESA region, SDEP will first establish presence in targeted priority zones. During this period, the model, tools, and local partnerships will be validated, with special attention to food security, digital inclusion, energy, and MSMEs. Technical systems such as FlexSus will ensure data-driven rollouts.
2. **ACTESA Power Play (Years 4–10)**: Leveraging the regional infrastructure built under SDEP, the ACTESA Power Play phase aims to transition food security and agricultural resilience into a unified regional trading, innovation, and value chain ecosystem under ACTESA. This marks the programme's evolution from empowerment into Pan-African economic architecture.



3. **Research, Education, and Advocacy Expansion (Years 5–12):** This phase will see the emergence of academic and advocacy infrastructure, led by the Council for Global Social Advocacy, and inclusion of higher education programs via partnerships with Unity Academy Center of Excellence (UACE) and UCE. Research, PhDs, and policy innovation will be embedded into country-level SDEP expansions.
4. **Agenda for Social Equity 2074 (Year 7 Onward):** All systems will feed into the long-term delivery of the Agenda for Social Equity 2074, providing the policy, funding, and innovation direction for the remaining 43 years of the initiative. With 17 Social Global Goals aligned to Africa's Agenda 2063, this stage becomes the meta-framework for impact, ensuring consistency, generational justice, and global relevance.

4.3 Geographic and Temporal Scope

Geographic Focus: The programme's operational scope is strictly aligned to the COMESA region, with flexibility to include strategic partners from adjacent nations or RECs where geopolitical or trade priorities support expansion.

Timeframe:

- **Years 1–7 (Rollout and Upscaling):** Deployment of zonal infrastructure, piloting in 6–10 countries, establishing governance bodies, formalizing donor pathways, and securing long-term institutional commitments.
- **Years 8–50 (Full-Speed Operation):** Strategic maturity phase in which SDEP evolves into an institutionalized system under Agenda 2074. Each country operates its own tenants under a unified, African-owned framework with modular innovation channels and transnational cooperation.

5. Governance and Operational Structure Within SDEP

To operationalize the Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) across the COMESA region in a way that is both inclusive and resilient, a multi-layered governance framework will be implemented inside the programme itself. This framework balances regional oversight with national autonomy and local participation.

5.1 Joint Steering Committee (JSC)

The Joint Steering Committee will serve as the highest oversight body within SDEP, responsible for setting strategic direction, ensuring donor alignment, and approving annual operational priorities. Its composition reflects both donor and recipient representation, including:

- Representatives from SIDA the other four organisations from Sweden
- COMESA Secretariat and ACTESA,
- EUSL
- AECF Africa (as the principal implementation partner),
- Country focal points from participating member states,
- Observers from AfDB and other aligned institutions.

The JSC convenes regularly and sets both policy orientation and investment targets, ensuring the integrity of the programme's social, environmental, and developmental outcomes.

5.2 Project Management Unit (PMU)

The Project Management Unit will serve as the day-to-day executive body responsible for coordinating programme activities, reporting to the JSC. It will manage timelines, outputs, financing streams, stakeholder relations, and external communication. Key functions include:

- Coordinating between regional and national activities,
- Overseeing subcontractors and local delivery agents,
- Ensuring alignment with climate mitigation and Agenda 2063 commitments,
- Integrating data from the FlexSus system and ECHO platform.

This unit will be housed within the operational architecture of EUSL and acting as a recurring innovation partner, providing modular tools based on the Charity as a Business (CaaB) model.

5.3 Investment and Export Facilitation Platform (IEFP)

To ensure SDEP catalyzes not only development but market integration and job creation, an Investment and Export Facilitation Platform (IEFP) will operate within the programme. The platform will:

- Match local producers with regional and international buyers,
- Work closely with Business Sweden and EKN to facilitate trade access,
- Offer de-risking services through blended finance, in collaboration with Swedfund and AfDB,
- Support local MSMEs to access EUSL membership benefits under the Charity as a Business framework,
- Encourage intra-African trade through ACTESA-linked value chains.

This component ensures that SDEP is a socioeconomic engine—turning aid and capacity-building into self-sustaining economic systems.

5.4 National Coordination Nodes (Optional Component)

Countries participating in SDEP will have the option to establish National Coordination Nodes (NCNs) to facilitate coordination at the local level. These nodes will:

- Interface with the PMU and JSC through a national representative,
- Serve as platforms for capacity-building, stakeholder dialogue, and decentralization,
- Coordinate with ministries, local governments, and universities,
- Use the ECHO system to align real-time data with policy decisions.

NCNs are especially recommended in larger or high-priority countries where multiple zones are expected to operate simultaneously.

6: Implementation Flow of SDEP

The implementation of the Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) is rooted in a **systems-based delivery model** that aligns strategic vision, sector-specific expertise, and operational technology within a unified framework. This chapter outlines the flow from concept to deployment, highlighting institutional interlinkages, implementation mechanisms, and the evolution of SDEP across the COMESA region.

6.1 ECHO as the Digital Nervous System

The ECHO platform will serve as the central infrastructure for monitoring, evaluation, and collaborative coordination. It links:

- Government ministries, donors, and field-level actors
- Subcontractors and private sector partners
- FlexSus sensors and real-time data dashboards
- Agricultural and construction projects
- Stakeholder communications and reporting tools

ECHO is modular, enabling use across different institutional and cultural contexts. It is particularly suited to projects that require multi-zone coordination and long-term learning loops, making it ideal for the 50-year vision of SDEP.

6.2 Capacity Building as a Transversal Function

Vocational training and community-based capacity building will be treated as a transversal element of SDEP, not confined to a single programme or institution. This includes:

- Entrepreneurship training in agricultural value chains
- Technical skills development in digital infrastructure and energy systems
- Civic education and participatory governance
- Social entrepreneurship and Charity as a Business models (via EUSL support)

These initiatives will be driven through local delivery agents, national partners, and subcontractors like EUSL and their member SMEs, embedded into each zone's development cycle.

6.3 Zone-Based Implementation

The entire implementation logic of SDEP will be **zonal**. Each country will define and manage multiple **geographic or thematic zones**, each with its own needs assessments, investment logic, and progress tracking. Each zone will:

- Be integrated with FlexSus and ECHO systems
- Report data and progress to the PMU
- Receive research and training inputs from UCE/UACE (later)
- Pilot economic transition models aligned with ACTESA priorities

This allows micro-level precision while still contributing to macro-level transformation across the region.

7: Strategic Advantages for Each Partner

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) creates a platform for long-term, inclusive, and scalable transformation across the COMESA region. While SDEP is built around shared goals, the value proposition for each participating partner — public, private, development, and technical — is uniquely tailored. This chapter explores those advantages and articulates why a

coordinated multi-partner structure is not only preferable but strategically superior to fragmented, bilateral approaches.

7.1 SIDA: Leveraging Legacy and Leadership

SIDA stands at the centre of Sweden's development diplomacy and, in this initiative, acts as the entry point for Sweden's broader development collaboration platform, consisting of a five-part coordination group.

SIDA's active role in SDEP would demonstrate leadership in operationalizing Agenda 2030 and African partnerships, especially in green transition, inclusive growth, and private-sector development. The partnership with EUSL and AECF Africa allows SIDA to amplify existing partnerships while introducing new ecosystem-level solutions through digital governance, climate monitoring, and institutional reform.

7.2 AECF Africa: Deepening Field-Level Transformation

As a longstanding implementation partner of SIDA, AECF Africa brings a field-tested, investor-minded, and enterprise-oriented approach to rural transformation and impact financing. Within SDEP, AECF is expected to play two roles:

- Primary implementer in designated programme areas and countries, particularly in agriculture, energy access, and inclusive finance
- Framework holder for subcontractors, where organisations like EUSL can be embedded within AECF-managed deliverables, enabling flexibility without compromising quality assurance or governance standards

This allows AECF to scale its presence and performance across COMESA while continuing its results-based financing models — but within a broader, long-term architecture.

7.3 Swedfund: Impact Investment at Regional Scale

Swedfund will be uniquely positioned to blend concessional finance with equity and debt investment instruments to support mostly Swedish but sometime also local SMEs, social enterprises, and infrastructure service providers within the SDEP ecosystem. Their involvement ensures:

- Return-driven investments with clear developmental metrics
- Leverage of public-private financing
- Targeted support to scalable ventures aligned with SDEP sectors (e.g., healthcare, clean energy, digital services)

Swedfund's participation thus creates a bridge between mission-driven programming and financially sustainable entrepreneurship.

7.4 Business Sweden & EKN: Catalysts for Trade and Export Diplomacy

The inclusion of Business Sweden and EKN (Exportkreditnämnden) introduces structured pathways for Swedish technology, expertise, and private sector innovation to contribute to the development journey in COMESA. Their joint value includes:

- Enabling Swedish firms to enter African markets through development partnerships
- De-risking innovation projects using export credit guarantees

- Promoting co-creation models between Swedish suppliers and African SMEs or municipalities

Together with EUSL, these actors can contribute to building transparent, socially grounded supply chains within SDEP sectors, anchored in both European and African realities.

7.5 EUSL: Translating Charity as a Business into Development Practice

The European Social Label (EUSL), as a membership-driven platform rooted in the Charity as a Business (CaaB) model, brings a distinct, mission-aligned approach that fuses private sector incentives with social impact objectives. Under SDEP, EUSL offers:

- A network of SMEs that can act as changemakers and subcontractors in SDEP zones
- Access to FlexSus, and ECHO infrastructure, platform and tools for monitoring, transparency, and multistakeholder coordination
- A compliance and governance framework capable of operating in high-complexity environments

EUSL's participation ensures that local content, ownership, and impact are built into all layers of delivery — from grassroots to national institutions.

7.6 Joint Value of the Consortium Approach

By working as a consortium rather than through disconnected bilateral relationships, the partners:

- Share infrastructure, data, and visibility
- Reduce duplication of efforts and administrative overhead
- Maximise scale and replicability
- Send a unified signal of long-term commitment to COMESA countries
- Enable phased entry points and exits without compromising programme integrity

This coordinated mechanism also ensures smoother alignment with AfDB, other RECs, and institutional partners that may be brought into SDEP during scale-up phases.

8: The Path Forward – The ACTESA Power Play

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme (SDEP) is not only a foundational initiative for delivering transformative change across COMESA but also a launchpad for a broader, multi-layered framework of continental cooperation, development finance, and regional integration. The organic evolution from SDEP into what will become known as the ACTESA Power Play represents a natural and strategic scaling of ambitions, partners, and structures.

8.1 Timeline and Structural Overlap

- **SDEP is scheduled to begin implementation in July 2025**, with a planned rollout and upscaling phase over 5–7 years.
- **ACTESA Power Play is targeted for launch in January 2027**, not as a replacement but as a layered extension and institutional consolidation of SDEP's initial ecosystem.

This overlapping structure affirms that ACTESA Power Play is not a discrete or isolated phase, but rather an organically growing platform built on the groundwork of SDEP. The dual-track strategy ensures

continuity, learning, adaptation, and the seamless transition of momentum from localized empowerment to system-wide capacity and governance.

8.2 Defining the ACTESA Power Play

The ACTESA Power Play consists of two core dimensions:

1. **A Project Package** – A bundled programme framework that incorporates the full breadth of development initiatives under SDEP and expands them into long-term institutional pillars, aligned with ACTESA's mandate and COMESA's regional strategies.
2. **A Funding Package** – A mechanism designed to attract, align, and channel multi-source capital (public, private, philanthropic, and multilateral) into these programme components, ensuring sustainability and implementation autonomy.

The Power Play is structured around five interlinked components, housed under the Global Social Equity Alliance (GSEA):

- **Agenda for Social Equity 2074** – EUSL's own agenda and framework
- **African Unity 2063** – EUSL's project platform aligned with Agenda 2063
- **Council for Global Social Advocacy** – advocacy, high-level strategy and education for leaders
- **Unity Center of Excellence** – a dedicated research center with 18 directions in Africa and EU
- **Unity Academy Center of Excellence** – a platform for PhD students to participate in research

GSEA serves as the guardian and holder of these five pillars, maintaining coherence and the broader African Union aspirations through Agenda 2063.

8.3 The Role of GSIA – Public-Private Governance and Compliance

The Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA) operates as the PPP governance and compliance framework for the implementation and strategic orchestration of the Power Play. It is structured as an independent external membership-based architecture that facilitates:

- Public-private partnerships with member states, regional economic communities, and development actors
- Standardised legal, financial, and operational templates for project execution
- Regulatory compliance, data transparency, and audit mechanisms
- The ability to offer platform leasing (e.g., ECHO) and technical assistance in contexts where governments are unable or unwilling to procure full digital or strategic infrastructure

Through GSIA, private and public partners can enter and operate under a trusted, rules-based umbrella, ensuring both flexibility and integrity across all countries and sectors.

8.4 Strategic Anchoring in African Unity 2063

All implementation under SDEP will be derived from the ten flagship programmes already defined within African Unity 2063, which serve as the sectoral backbone of the rollout. These programmes span:

- Agriculture and food security

- Digital transformation and innovation
- Sustainable trade and market integration
- Energy and climate resilience
- Environmental and water governance
- Transport and infrastructure
- Governance and inclusion
- Education and access to knowledge
- Health and human development
- Institutional capacity and public service delivery

These ten anchor programmes form the "what" of SDEP: the thematic areas in which local development, infrastructure investments, and social empowerment will take place.

8.5 Expertise from the Unity Center of Excellence (UCE)

To ensure academic integrity and technical precision, each African Unity 2063 flagship programme will be guided by one or more of the 18 specialized research divisions of the Unity Center of Excellence (UCE). These divisions represent Africa's most urgent and strategic areas of transformation, and include domains such as:

- Climate-smart agriculture
- Circular economies
- Peace and conflict resolution
- Digital inclusion
- Renewable energy
- Smart cities and transport
- Gender equity
- Migration and diaspora engagement

Each division brings scientific rigor, localized expertise, and policy recommendations that are translated into action through SDEP zones. The same structure is mirrored by the 18 EU-based divisions of UCE, forming a North-South research collaboration platform.

8.6 PhD Research and the Unity Academy (UACE)

In collaboration with the Unity Academy Center of Excellence (UACE), each of the 18 African UCE divisions hosts one or more **PhD programmes** as part of the Unity Research Track. These doctoral initiatives are:

- Closely aligned with SDEP and other implementation zones
- Anchored in real-world data from the ECHO and FlexSus platforms
- Co-supervised by African and European scholars

- Designed to influence national policy and regional practice

This integration of research into programme implementation transforms ACTESA Power Play into a living laboratory, where evidence drives impact and knowledge is democratized.

8.7 Institutional Evolution and Strategic Anchoring

As SDEP grows and expands its reach across COMESA member states, the necessity for layered, long-term institutions becomes evident. The transition into ACTESA Power Play reflects the natural scaling of:

- SDEP projects into institutional pillars of regional development
- Pilot initiatives into replicable models across multiple nations
- Temporary consortia into permanent collaborative architectures

This evolution not only includes GSEA and GSIA but also leads to the full integration of the Council for Global Social Advocacy and the research and academic coordination through the Unity Center of Excellence (UCE) and Unity Academy Center of Excellence (UACE).

8.8 Strategic Purpose of the Power Play

The ACTESA Power Play aims to accomplish four major strategic objectives:

1. **Institutional Stability:** Provide COMESA and its member states with a fully-fledged infrastructure for managing sustainable development beyond the SDEP horizon.
2. **Financial Sovereignty:** Enable partner countries to design and absorb financial flows from multilateral, private, and development finance institutions with minimal leakage and maximal alignment.
3. **Continental Convergence:** Offer a tangible example of REC integration and AU Agenda 2063 operationalisation, creating a pathway for replication across other African RECs.
4. **Global Legitimacy:** Through GSEA and GSIA, provide a replicable model of North-South collaboration anchored in equity, capacity, and shared governance.

8.9 The 50-Year Horizon

Anchoring both SDEP and ACTESA Power Play is the Agenda for Social Equity 2074, our unifying vision and policy framework for the next half-century. With its 17 Social Global Goals and deep alignment with both the SDGs and AU aspirations, Agenda 2074 ensures that our efforts:

- Transcend political cycles
- Align with planetary boundaries and demographic realities
- Deliver continuity, legitimacy, and long-term value

By January 2074, the legacy of this work will not be defined by individual programmes or funding streams but by the institutions, ecosystems, and mindsets that were changed, built, and made permanent.

Conclusion and Call to Action

The Social Development and Empowerment Programme – Multi-Actor Cooperation Framework (SDEP-MACF) represents a significant milestone in Africa’s journey towards sustainable development, inclusive growth, and long-term prosperity. It is built on the principles of equity, collaboration, and sustainability, with an eye toward EUSL’s Agenda for Social Equity 2074 as a guiding vision for the next 50 years.

SDEP-MACF invites all stakeholders — from governments and private enterprises to civil society and academia — to actively contribute their expertise, resources, and commitment to this collective effort. The convergence of key partners such as SIDA, AECF Africa, Swedfund, Business Sweden, Exportkreditnämnden, ACTESA and others is a testament to the collaborative spirit that underpins the framework’s success.

By harnessing the strengths of diverse sectors, aligning with the priorities of the African Union and COMESA, and supporting the goals of the Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goals, SDEP-MACF aims to unlock unprecedented opportunities for regional integration, climate resilience, economic empowerment, and social equity across the continent.

This framework is more than just a set of projects — it is a shared commitment to a future where sustainability is the norm, social equity is realized, and prosperity is achieved for all. As we prepare for the launch in July 2025, the road ahead is clear: together, we can turn vision into action and action into lasting change.

Let us move forward, united in purpose, as we lay the foundation for a brighter, more inclusive future for Africa and Europe alike.