

RURAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM COMMUNIQUÉ

A Declaration of Africa's Rural Priorities for the Post-2030 Agenda

Prepared by **Rural Nurture Initiative** and the **African Rural Development Network**



Thursday,
20 August 2026



Centre for Sustainable
Development (CESDEV),
University of Ibadan, Nigeria



Adopted at the
Rural Development Forum,
a side event of the 17th Annual
Ibadan Sustainable Development
Summit (ISDS)



PEOPLE



PARTNERSHIPS



RURAL SOLUTIONS



SUSTAINABILITY



A STRONGER AFRICA

RURAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM COMMUNIQUÉ

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Adopted at Ibadan, Nigeria, on Thursday, 20 August 2026

PREAMBLE

We, the participants of the Rural Development Forum, held under the theme "Building Africa's Rural Future Beyond the Sustainable Development Goals," comprising representatives of government, non-governmental and civil society organizations, academia, development practitioners, young people, farmers, and rural communities, meeting in person and virtually in Ibadan, Nigeria, on 20 August 2026;

Convened at the invitation of Rural Nurture Initiative (RNI) and the African Rural Development Network (ARDN), as a side event of the 17th Annual Ibadan Sustainable Development Summit, organised by the Centre for Sustainable Development (CESDEV), University of Ibadan, in collaboration with the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Nigeria;

Recalling that the Sustainable Development Goals conclude in 2030, and that the majority of Africa's poorest citizens will continue to live and work in rural areas well beyond that horizon;

Acknowledging that despite decades of rural development projects across the continent, many rural communities remain poor, food insecure, underserved, and excluded from the decisions that shape their futures;

Recognizing that project-based development, however well executed, has too often produced fragmented interventions, donor dependency, weak institutional ownership, duplicated investments, and short-lived impact;

Affirming that rural communities are not merely beneficiaries of development interventions, but partners, leaders, and co-creators of development, with a rightful claim to influence over the decisions, resources, and interventions that shape their livelihoods and wellbeing;

Convinced that the framework which succeeds the Sustainable Development Goals will be judged, above all, by what it delivers for rural people, and that rural Africa must be an author of that framework and not merely its subject;

Have adopted this Communiqué:

PART I | OBSERVATIONS

From projects to institutionalised programmes

1. **Observes** that rural development initiatives across Africa remain vulnerable to changes in political leadership because they are implemented as time-

bound projects rather than as institutionalised programmes, and that continuity requires legislation, predictable financing, and clear accountability, supported where appropriate by legally backed and independently funded institutions.

Community ownership and participation

2. **Affirms** that sustainable rural development must be grounded in the realities, priorities, and knowledge of rural communities, and that development actors cannot determine community priorities from offices or through externally designed interventions.
3. **Stresses** that communities must participate across the full development cycle, from needs identification and design through financing, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and maintenance, and that participation must reach residents themselves and not only community leadership, since leaders do not always speak the mind of their people.
4. **Recognizes** the Community-Driven Development approach as a proven model for strengthening community ownership, transparency, accountability, inclusion, efficient use of resources, effective maintenance and sustainability of development interventions.

Rural women's agency

5. **Recognizes** the central contribution of rural women to agriculture, food production, and rural livelihoods, while noting that their participation remains constrained by limited access to land, finance, education, training, technology, and decision-making spaces.
6. **Emphasizes** that rural women must move from receiving development interventions to co-creating them, and identifies as priorities:
 - access to land and productive resources, and financial empowerment;
 - education, capacity development, and digital literacy;
 - representation in community, farmers', and local decision-making structures; and
 - recognition of women's productive, reproductive, and community responsibilities in development planning.

Young people and the future of rural livelihoods

7. **Expresses concern** at the declining attractiveness of agriculture and rural livelihoods to young people, who are unlikely to remain in or return to rural areas that lack infrastructure, healthcare, connectivity, security, and fair economic opportunity.
8. **Considers** that agriculture must be repositioned as a business and value-chain opportunity rather than as subsistence production, and that young people must be engaged not only as beneficiaries but as partners, innovators, entrepreneurs, and peacebuilders.

Infrastructure and basic services

9. **Recognizes** that rural transformation requires simultaneous investment in productive infrastructure and social services, identifying poor roads, limited healthcare, inadequate water supply, unreliable energy, weak digital connectivity, and insecurity as major constraints on rural livelihoods, and directing such investment towards self-reliance rather than short-term assistance.

Local and indigenous knowledge

10. **Recognizes** that rural communities hold valuable indigenous knowledge which should not be dismissed as obsolete, and that development and extension systems should build upon it while integrating appropriate scientific and digital innovation.
11. **Notes** that engagement, training, and extension materials delivered without local-language provision exclude some of the very people they are intended to serve.

From activities to outcomes

12. **Observes** that development programmes are too often assessed by the number of activities conducted rather than by the changes generated in people's lives, that effort alone is insufficient, and that development actors should ask not only what was done, but what changed, for whom, and whether the change can be sustained.

Funders, non-governmental organizations, and communities

13. **Acknowledges** the role of non-governmental organizations in connecting communities with resources, expertise, and opportunity, while expressing concern at situations in which donor priorities determine interventions without sufficient regard for community-defined needs.
14. **Considers** that such organizations should function as facilitators of community-led change rather than as dominant actors determining priorities, and that success should be measured by community ownership, strengthened local capacity, and lasting outcomes rather than by completed activities and submitted reports.

Policy and grassroots reality

15. **Identifies** a persistent gap between government policies, development opportunities, and the realities experienced by rural communities, noting reports that opportunities often fail to reach the grassroots, that incentives intended for farmers frequently do not reach them, and that information is sometimes collected from communities without any return to implement agreed solutions.
16. **Notes with concern** the constraints reported by community representatives, including insecurity, access to farmland, labour shortages, post-harvest losses, and inadequate public services.

PART II | A SHARED VISION FOR 2045

17. **Records** that participants, in person and online, were asked what rural Africa must look like by 2045, and that their responses converged on a shared vision of rural Africa as:



Figure 1: Responses of Forum participants to the question, in person and online. Word size reflects how often each word was given.

18. **Envisions** a rural Africa able to withstand climate shocks, disease outbreaks, and market changes while feeding itself; in which residents have access to the resources, infrastructure, and digital opportunities available elsewhere in the world; in which rural status denotes location rather than deprivation; and, above all, in which young people choose to build their futures.

PART III | CALLS FOR ACTION

To governments at federal, state, and local levels

19. **Calls upon** governments to institutionalise rural development by transforming viable projects into sustainable programmes supported by legislation, dedicated financing, and accountable institutions.
20. **Calls upon** governments to mainstream community-driven and bottom-up approaches across rural development policy and programming at all tiers.
21. **Calls upon** governments to treat roads, healthcare, water, electricity, digital connectivity, education, and security as core components of rural development rather than as adjuncts to it.
22. **Calls upon** governments to ensure that policies, opportunities, incentives, and inputs reach the communities, farmers, and households for whom they are intended, supported by functioning feedback, complaint, and accountability mechanisms, including direct channels of communication between communities and implementing institutions.
23. **Urges** governments to address the constraints on rural livelihoods, including insecurity of farmland, access to finance, labour shortages, post-harvest losses, market access, and inadequate public services.

To development partners, funders, and non-governmental organizations

- 24. ***Calls for*** development financing that is flexible, locally responsive, and aligned with priorities identified by communities themselves, allowing communities greater influence over how resources intended for their development are used.
- 25. ***Urges*** development partners and non-governmental organizations to reinforce local institutions and ownership rather than substituting for community leadership.
- 26. ***Recommends*** that capacity-building include structured follow-up, mentorship, and practical demonstration, so that skills acquired are converted into sustainable enterprises and improved practice.
- 27. ***Recommends*** that monitoring and evaluation measure improvements in livelihoods, income, productivity, wellbeing, institutional capacity, community ownership, and sustainability, rather than counting activities.

To all stakeholders in rural transformation

- 28. ***Calls for*** the meaningful participation of rural communities throughout the development cycle, and for greater access for rural women to land, finance, productive resources, education, digital skills, and decision-making spaces.
- 29. ***Calls for*** the repositioning of agriculture as a commercially attractive livelihood for young people, through value-chain development, entrepreneurship, technology, skills development, access to finance and markets, and improved rural infrastructure.
- 30. ***Calls for*** the recognition of local and indigenous knowledge as a development resource, integrated with appropriate scientific and digital innovation, and supported by materials and engagement in local languages.
- 31. ***Calls for*** investment in value addition and the productive use of agricultural residues and by-products, creating employment for women and young people while reducing waste and environmental harm.
- 32. ***Calls for*** strengthened animal and plant health systems, including on-farm biosecurity, farmer training, responsible use of veterinary medicines, and regional disease surveillance and data sharing, in recognition that disease does not respect borders.
- 33. ***Calls for*** investment in digital skills, connectivity, and emerging technologies to be matched by policies ensuring that innovation benefits rural communities while protecting rights, security, and social inclusion.
- 34. ***Calls for*** support to farmers' associations, rural networks, and learning platforms that enable knowledge exchange, collective action, and access to opportunity.
- 35. ***Calls for*** structured partnership among government, academia, civil society, development partners, the private sector, and rural communities, to ensure continuity and accountability beyond political and funding cycles.

PART IV | CONCLUSION

- 36. Concludes** that Africa's rural future cannot be built through isolated projects, externally determined priorities, or short-term interventions, and that sustainable rural transformation will depend not only on the resources committed, but on who defines priorities, who participates in decisions, who controls resources, who is accountable, and whether communities are empowered to sustain the gains achieved.
- 37. Commits** the participants to advancing the priorities of this Communiqué within their institutions and networks, and the conveners, Rural Nurture Initiative and the African Rural Development Network, to disseminating this Communiqué to policymakers and stakeholders, producing a policy brief of the Forum's key messages, and sustaining this dialogue as a recurring platform.
- 38. Calls upon** all stakeholders to translate the priorities set out in this Communiqué into coordinated action towards a more inclusive, resilient, prosperous, locally owned, and sustainable rural future for Africa beyond 2030.

ADOPTION

This Communiqué reflects the deliberations of the Forum's panel, the contributions of participants in person and online, and written submissions received. Individual and institutional endorsements are held on record by Rural Nurture Initiative.

Done at Ibadan, Nigeria, this 20th day of August 2026.

Issued for and on behalf of the participants of the Rural Development Forum.

Damilola Olajubutu

Convener, Rural Development Forum

Founder and Executive Director, Rural Nurture Initiative

Principal Coordinator, African Rural Development Network

Dr. Oluwaseun Adeleke

Senior Lecturer, Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Mr. Ali Jibril

Chairman, Irewolede Farmers' Association

Gbedun, Ona-Ara Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria

ANNEX | ABOUT THE FORUM

This annex records the occasion on which this Communiqué was adopted. It is provided for context and does not form part of the Declaration.

Forum: Rural Development Forum (maiden edition)

Theme: Building Africa's Rural Future Beyond the Sustainable Development Goals

Convened by: Rural Nurture Initiative (RNI) and the African Rural Development Network (ARDN)

Occasion: A side event of the 17th Annual Ibadan Sustainable Development Summit (ISDS), organised by the Centre for Sustainable Development (CESDEV), University of Ibadan, in collaboration with the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Nigeria

Date and venue: Thursday, 20 August 2026, 11:30 am to 1:00 pm (WAT), Centre for Sustainable Development, 20 Awolowo Avenue, Old Bodija Estate, Ibadan, and online via Zoom

Interactive dialogue: What must rural Africa look like by 2045?

Participation: The hybrid event brought together approximately 300 participants, both in person and online, from Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Cameroon, Somalia, the African diaspora in Brazil and the United States, and other countries.

Keynote Address

Hon. Olasunkanmi Olaleye, Esq., Honourable Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Oyo State, represented by Mr. Lekan Egunbiyi

Panelists

Mr. Lekan Egunbiyi, Director of Rural Development, Oyo State Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr. Salau Jelili Olaniyi, General Manager, Oyo State Community and Social Development Agency

Dr. Oluwaseun Adeleke, Senior Lecturer, Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, University of Ibadan

Mrs. Damilola Olajubutu, Founder and Executive Director, Rural Nurture Initiative

Mr. Adebisi Michael Oladeji, Founder, Sustainable Peace and Leadership Initiative (SUPLIN)

Mr. Ali Jibril, Chairman, Irewolede Farmers' Association, Gbedun, Ona-Ara Local Government Area, Oyo State

Mrs. Kudirat Abdullateef, Farmer and member, Irewolede Farmers' Association, Gbedun, Ona-Ara Local Government Area, Oyo State

Host

Mrs. Damilola Olajubutu, Founder and Executive Director, Rural Nuture Initiative; Principal Coordinator, African Rural Development Network

Panel Moderator

Mr. Godwin Ebiloma, Nigeria Country Manager, Rural Nuture Initiative

Presentation of the Communiqué for adoption

Mr. Ayodeji Oladimeji, Deputy Executive Director, Rural Nuture Initiative

MEDIA COVERAGE

The Forum was reported by [Vanguard Newspapers](#) and featured on [TVC News](#).

ABOUT THIS COMMUNIQUÉ

The Rural Development Forum Communiqué, prepared by Rural Nuture Initiative (RNI) and the African Rural Development Network (ARDN), presents a collective declaration of Africa's rural priorities for the post-2030 development agenda. It captures key issues, recommendations, and commitments emerging from the Rural Development Forum, held as a side event of the 17th Annual Ibadan Sustainable Development Summit (ISDS), organised by the Centre for Sustainable Development (CESDEV), University of Ibadan, in collaboration with the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Nigeria.



OUR VISION

Thriving rural communities driving a prosperous, equitable, and sustainable Africa.

OUR MISSION

To advance people-centred, evidence-informed, and collaborative solutions for rural development across Africa.

Suggested citation

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<https://rnionline.org/rdfcommuniqué2026/>



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