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NEPAD AND ITS CHALLENGES IN AFRICA: NIGERIA EXPERIENCE

BY

Nwachukwu Okechukwu Ph.D

Abia State University Uturu, Nigeria

Email: Okechukwu.nwachukwu@abiastateuniversity.edu.ng

Abstract

The post-colonial Nigeria has been faced with serious challenges which led to the formation of several economic organizations as well as her membership of international organizations outside Africa in pursuit of development for the country. Therefore, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), is an indigenous concerted effort by African leaders which is aimed at curbing the economic problems challenging the continent. NEPAD is meant to ensure a new development model and growth for Nigeria under this partnership, yet regardless of Nigeria's participation in NEPAD, her contributions, efforts and compliance with the goals and policies of this organization, the country's domestic environment is yet to be impacted as expected. Using secondary sources subjected to historical analysis, it is found that Nigeria neither attained self-reliance nor did we improve our human development index despite this partnership as intended by NEPAD. Nigeria did not also integrate NEPAD's vision into our national development plan and thus making the country depend more on external help as against the good intentions of NEPAD that seeks for the economic betterment of Nigeria. It concludes that, Nigeria still relies on external support for both monetary and food sufficiency. Similarly, it is not as a result of the unavailability of sufficient monetary, political or social contributions by the Nigerian Government rather the country's poor development state is a product of the lack of will and inability of establishing a practical supervisory and monitoring drive for the full implementation of the policy framework of NEPAD in Nigeria.

Keywords: Africa, NEPAD, Development, Leaders, Growth, Economy, Poverty.

Introduction/ Historical Background of NEPAD

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which has now been re-launched as the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD) in 2018, which participants noted that it was a turning point in its evolution as an African initiative by her leaders to address African development deficit issues and economic problems. There are fifty-four countries in Africa today with an aggregate population that stood at 1,433,706,775 as of Sunday, May 28, 2023, based on the latest United Nations estimates (UN 2023 Report). According to the Senegalese President Macky Sall, who served as the Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee Chairperson (HSGOC) a body saddled with the responsibility of providing leadership to the NEPAD process and policies, priorities and programmes of action, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is the pan-African strategic framework for the socio-economic development of the continent. NEPAD was officially adopted by the AU in 2002 as the primary mechanism to coordinate the pace and impact of Africa's development in the 21st century (New Partnership For Africa's Development (NEPAD) | African Union (au.int)). The NEPAD was formed during President Olusegun Obasanjo's tenure, together with other African countries under the umbrella of the African Union (AU), in order to fight a common cause on challenges facing the African continent.

Objectives

Its primary objective is to provide a new mechanism, spearheaded by African leaders, to:

1. Eradicate poverty
2. Place African countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development
3. Accelerate the empowerment of women
4. Fully integrate Africa into the global economy.

The idea of inventing NEPAD is on the belief that African leaders under the African Union (AU) through which this organization is formed, will independently devoid of any external influences address African economic problems through ownership and management of the organization. In 2008,

Heads of State and Government, Ministers and representatives of Member States adopted a political declaration to address “Africa's development needs: state of implementation of various commitments, challenges and the way forward” (AUGA 63/1). NEPAD developed from three initiatives planned out to address the intricate challenges to growth faced by African states: the Millennium Africa Recovery Plan (MAP), led by former South African President Thabo Mbeki; the Omega Plan, developed by the former President of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade; and the New African Initiative (NAI), which combined the first two initiatives.

In 2001, these were reworked and expanded to provide a framework for all African states. NEPAD was adopted in 2001 by the defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU) 37th Summit and ratified by the African Union (AU) in 2002 at its first summit (<https://au.int/en/organs/nepad>). The association similarly seeks to make African leaders to be more aware of their roles in bringing healthier living standards to their societies. Suffice it to say that NEPAD is also an essential aspect of the African Union which commands the attention of the international community and African leaders themselves, activists and scholars geared towards the development of a new Africa. NEPAD intentions are to eradicate poverty in Africa and to collectively ensure a sustained development plan for all of Africa that will guarantee sustainable growth and development in the 21st century and at the same time place Africa in an active role in the world economy and politics.

Statement of the Problem

If NEPAD is a partnership that is based on mutually agreed responsibilities and accountabilities on the part of leaders of African countries and Africa's external partners, particularly in the areas of facilitating and coordinating the development of continent-wide programmes and projects, mobilizing resources and engaging the rural communities in Africa? Member states in the implementation of these programmes and projects ought to therefore live up to the responsibilities reposed on them by ensuring that the impact of this global organization counts in the continent's human development index and is also felt in the member countries as is observed in other continents and particularly Asian countries where a similar organization has done so much in impacting the continent.

Secondly, NEPAD wants to achieve "self-reliance" and argues forcefully that

Africans must be "masters of their destiny." Yet, it says that Africa needs to secure more aid and more credit to advance development and that the "bulk" of Africa's capital needs, "will have to come from outside Africa". Thus Nigeria as a country is worried about the challenges of debt relief, Agriculture and Food Security, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management, Regional Integration and Infrastructure, Human Development, Economic and Corporate Governance, Cross-Cutting Issues of Gender, ICT, Capacity Development and Communications which NEPAD stands for (<https://www.nepad.org/publication/nepad-brief#:~:text=Agriculture%20and%20Food,Development%20and%20Communications>). NEPAD has to be fully reinvigorated to make sure it is felt in the rural communities spread all over Africa from both the private sector, the external partners and particularly, the Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee Chairperson's (HSGOC) to prove that an indigenous organization through ownership and management is actually in place to address the numerous problems confronting Nigeria and Africa by extension.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, this study is embedded under the theories of the Neo-liberal theoretical framework and anchored on Dudley Seers' modules of Development (1969). Neo-liberal theory as you find was advanced by Alexander Rustow, Walter Lippman and other 23 scholars at the Walter Lippman Debate in 1938 in Paris, France. The symposium defined the model of neoliberalism as the primacy of the price mechanism, the free enterprise, the system of competition and a strong and impartial state. The model was employed to describe an economic philosophy that has developed progressively since the late 1970s which refuses state control and positive government intervention in the economy and concentrates instead on free-market methods, fewer restrictions on business enterprise and the importance of property rights. To this end, the NEPAD initiative was advanced on the justification of local and global integration with greater importance on public-private partnership to accelerate growth and development in Nigeria.

This concept is apt in this study since the partners such as the Group of Eight Nations (G8), African Development Bank (AfDB) World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and The United Nations (UN) amongst other international institutions are driven by neo-liberalism assumptions of market-driven economy, deregulation, privatization, political supremacy with private sectors as the major players. It is therefore not in doubt that neoliberal policy

instruments are the foundation for the establishment of the NEPAD initiative keeping state intervention at a nominal level, thus one could conclude that the initiative is not entirely a product of Africa. For this reason, thus study agrees with Yusuf., Sule, & Ejima, alluded that NEPAD is all about African states seeking partnership, mainly, with the erstwhile imperial powers to promote their development and transformation (A. YUSUF., A. SULE & A.O. EJIMA 2020). Dudley Seers' (1969) theory on the other hand posits that a country's development is centers on the state of poverty, unemployment and inequality (S. Dudley1969).

Challenges

I support what Adeyemi said, “no country can be said to be developed if it cannot provide its entire populace with life sustenance and essential infrastructure such as housing, education, clothing, food, security, health, and employment opportunities; and above all chart out plans for socio-economic development” (A. Adeyemi1999).

The effort towards development has seen countries embracing various methods and approaches to ensure a sufficient supply of infrastructure, societal justice, security, environmental safety and quality of life for its populace. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), is yet to impact positively on Nigeria's economy, especially health, agricultural, industrial and infrastructure development. This is after 21 years of its existence. It was the South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, Chairperson of the African Union at a symposium by NEPAD to assess its achievements and challenges after two decades of existence in the African continent that said, “The coronavirus pandemic has had a severe impact on African economies, on public health need and indeed the African Union itself. It has served as a stark reminder of our weaknesses and global interconnectedness because, in the end, what affects one, affects us all.” (J.Uche 2021)

Ifediora Amobi, the Executive Director of the African Heritage Institution, added his voice when he disclosed during a workshop on *strengthening the effectiveness of NEPAD in Nigeria: The Way Forward*, organized by the institution in Abuja in 2013 after 12 years of its activities in Nigeria. He noted: “Since NEPAD's establishment 12 years ago, Nigeria is one of the five founding member countries and one of its highest financial contributors without commensurate benefits to its economy”. In a similar vein, Dr. Okezie

Nwankwo, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Strategic Research and Studies, National Defense College, Nigeria, who spoke on “*NEPAD and the Challenges of Economic Development*,” said the New Partnership for Africa’s Development Nigeria lacks specific policies and strategies to monitor and achieve its objectives. According to him, NEPAD Nigeria is yet to impact positively in the area of Agriculture and infrastructural development, especially in the critical sectors of education and health (F. Alli 2013).

Therefore, despite its brilliant ideas and unique arrangements for development in Africa, the NEPAD initiative has been criticized for many of its shortcomings that are adduced to have impeded its plans for Africa. (Nwakamma 2016). A case in point, is that NEPAD has been opposed by anti-globalization groups such as labor unions, rights activists, and civil society groups for its ideological rationale. These groups have expressed dissatisfaction over the NEPAD's mission of integrating Africa into the global economy, and the role of the Group of Eight Nations (G8), OECD, IMF and the World Bank in the project, as it is believed that the participation of these institutions will poison negatively the development plan for Africa (J. Morbi 2011).

Hypothetically, this study is based on the theory of components of Economic Development, and it stated his worries mainly on poverty, unemployment and discrimination in the economy. This work shall examine the impact of NEPAD in Nigeria going by the findings that economic development pointers indicate that economic growth in Africa since the inception of NEPAD did not result in the reduction of poverty, inequality and unemployment as expected by the progenitors. Africa in comparison with other continents such as North America and in Asia still witnessed extreme poverty and inequality and you cannot point to any improved standard of living over the last 21 years. Nigeria, for instance, witnessed an increasing number of poor people. The Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), an association of organized private sector, has projected that Nigeria's unemployment rate will increase to 37 percent while the poverty headcount will amplify to 45 percent in 2023. The Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) said this is due to weak performance in the job-elastic sectors, low labor absorption of sectors that will drive growth, and population growth estimated at 3.2 percent, which it said, will lead to a decline in real per capita income (I. Omeje 2023). Thus widening the inequality gap in Nigeria which scored 35.1 in the 2022 Gini coefficient on countries with wealth inequality. With these scores, Nigeria is 11th in West Africa and 100th

out of 163 countries globally. Succinctly put, Nigeria has an income inequality of 1 to 14 for the top 10% to the bottom 50% of the population and 1 to 37 for the top 1% to the bottom 50% according to a 2022 report (C. Lucas, P. Thomas, S. Emmanuel & Z. Gabriel 2022), thereby remaining low on Human Development Index (HDI). See the table below.

Table 1 Nigeria's Inequality Outlook 2022:

	Average Income	Share of Total (%)	Average Wealth	Share of Total (%)
Full population	7,600	100.0	26,600	100.0
Bottom 50%	2,400	15.5	3,000	5.7
Middle 40%	8,000	41.8	156,300	58.1
Top 10%	32,700	42.7	154,300	58.1
Top 1%	88,600	11.6	669,500	25.2

Source:(World Inequality Report 2022)

In the light of these figures as seen above, there are consequences for security, deaths and corruption and more which is terrifying for democracy and global peace. Consistent with the reports examined, income inequality is high in Nigeria. Wealth disparity in the country is very high. The income inequality for the top 10% to the bottom 50% is 1 to 14. This simply means that one person's income in the top 10% of the population will pay for 14 persons in the bottom 50%. However, one person's income in the top 1% of the population will conveniently pay 37 persons in the bottom 50%. Income inequality between the top 1% to the bottom 50% is 1 to 37. Therefore the question that arises is, how has NEPAD impacted on the economic development in Nigeria especially given the objectives as set out?

Some of the NEPAD objectives, according to United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism (2007), were that African countries and their leaders agreed with the following in establishing the organization.

- Recognized that there cannot be sustainable development in Africa without the rule of law, legitimate power, predictable administration and responsive regulation that guarantees good governance.
- Agreed that if development is to be sustainable and serve the needs of Africans, then Africans must own it, initiate it, and lead the process.
- Agreed that sustainable development will only be possible if it is based on the resources of the region. It is assumed that the framers of NEPAD were aware of this and insisted that the process be anchored on African resources.
- Agreed that Africans accepted that they can develop faster with increased cooperation, forming partnerships amongst themselves and pooling their resources together.
- They also agreed that accelerated integration of the continent for mutual economic gains among African countries is vital in achieving economic sustainability and development (U.N Regional Coordination Mechanism Report 2007).

In the case of Nigeria, a number of challenges are accountable for the lack of complete execution of the NEPAD initiative despite the assumptions as encapsulated by the visionary. They include;

1. The absence of strengthened and sustained leadership institutions and will: The presence of fundamentally weak institutions of governance in a country like Nigeria where it has been very problematic to translate the national economic promises to realistic sustainable development raises disturbing fears. (Owogbemi 2012). The weakness of our institutions in Nigeria, the change of ideology of the political parties operational in Nigeria, the inconsistencies and political situation in most states of the federation and most especially the flagrant abuse of the rule of law by the political class in Nigeria, point to a weak institution which is a state of decline or powerlessness of government agencies to effectively discharge some of the fundamental responsibilities of the state such as the maintenance of law and order and the protection of its territorial integrity (A. Usman, A.R. Romle & A. Bashir 2015). Citing Usman and Bashir, Specific indicators of institutional weakness are losing control of territory or the sole power of using physical force therein, the crisis of legitimacy in which some part of the state seeks disintegration,

inability to provide basic services to the citizens etc. (A. Usman, A.R. Romle & A. Bashir 2015). In a customarily plural and conscientiously balkanized country like Nigeria, the rudimentary measure for the effectiveness of the government lies in its capability to advance an institutional framework that can assist the harmonious existence of the citizens through the integrative process of representative governance, detailed judicial system and active law enforcement agency. However, the Nigerian government was established on a fragile legitimacy, by the British imposing governmental system under which existed a somewhat weak central authority with more self-governing regions in terms of administration which habitually confer on the independent Nigerian state. The colonial legacy of relatively strong regional and local ethnic authorities and weak central institutions. Put differently, the contemporary Nigerian state has some of the regular attributes of institutional weakness such as central government incapacitation that it has minimal practical control over a lot of its territory; non-procurement of basic service; pervasive incidence of corruption and criminality; displacement of citizens due to crisis and threat of secession as well as a sharp economic decline.

2. Corruption: Any leadership that is devoid of transparency, accountability, credibility, justice, selflessness, and fair play is bad and cannot be trusted. This is a major setback for NEPAD Nigeria because it is shrouded in secrecy. According to Henwood, good governance should possess the following characteristics:

- (a) Prevent the occurrence of tyranny, anarchy, corruption, instability, paralysis, uninformed decision-making, unaccountability and unjustified secrecy;
- (b) Result in good, stable and accountable government stemming from effective prevention of negative political trials (R. Henwood 2001). The NEPAD in Nigeria is bedevilled with corruption that is affecting the actions and activities of the organization. Where there is good governance, you also find a predictable, open and enlightened public policy with a bureaucracy that is involved with professional ethos acting in furtherance of the public good, the rule of law, transparent processes and a strong civil society participating in public affairs

3. The absence of a steady Peer Review Mechanism Participation: It is also what mentioning that the shortcomings of the African Peer Review Mechanism in making sure good governance and obliteration of corruption and injustice in African states, particularly in the face of growing cases of misappropriation of public funds and frauds rocking governments in African countries and Nigeria

in particular raises concern. In addition, involvement in the peer review process is voluntary; hence member states that are not comfortable with the process may choose not to submit to APRM. Even those who eventually accede to the review face the challenge of poor monitoring and evaluation of the Programme of Action (PoA) implementation. Similarly, after reviews and assessments, the Heads of State and Government only receive the report prepared by the experts and make recommendations and that is the end of the process (E. Nwakamma 2016).

4. The absence of capacity building: Capacity building can take many forms in this context and they include, from improving NEPAD's organizational information technology and equipment, and growing its staff, to increasing its fundraising ability. Most commonly, capacity building means building staff skills through training, workshops, and seminars. It may also include on-the-job training, another powerful capacity-building tool. Capacity-building technical assistance can be provided for such an important organization by advisors from African Union headquarters, member countries, external supporters, donor agencies and communities; by partner staff to their peers; and by outside consultants contracted at any level. Unfortunately, these things are lacking in NEPAD Nigeria.

5. Over-dependence on external funds for its implementation: The study further revealed that the inadequate resource mobilization for the partnership has been a clog in the realization of her vision. According to Anangwe, this may well be the basis for the low contribution and inadequate domestic resource mobilization for the NEPAD project, thus the only way out to match the capital-investment gap is through foreign exchange with several conditionalities prevalent in our world today (A. Anangwe 2002). As you know, NEPAD did not provide for comprehensive people-centred development plan with private sector-led growth except for the member countries contributions which are not certain.

6. The lack of integration of NEPAD priorities into national development programs: Government at the moment is to practically recognize the need for a well-thought-out plan to guide the attainment of the NEPAD's Plans and objectives in line with the National Development Plans Nigeria is currently implementing that is, the 2021-2025 development plan, the 2020- 2050 development etc. A participatory process involving a wide range of stakeholders should be adopted to harvest inputs into the formulation of these plans. To ensure that the new plan remains a truly National Development Plan, all the 36 states of the Federation and Federal Capital Territory Administration

as well as representatives of the Local Government Councils and Organized Private Sector, Youths, labour Unions, Traditional and Religious organizations, amongst others, must all be involved in the preparation process. For Nigeria to achieve its objectives for future development, and to ensure that NEPAD succeeds beyond the current lip service, the country's approach must recognize the multi-faceted and interlinked nature of sustainable development, which calls for interventions to be tackled simultaneously through a coordinated approach to implementing development programmes.

7. The inability of member countries to back up their commitments with actionable and concrete steps: The success of NEPAD will be determined to a large extent, on the establishment of a strong implementation mechanism and framework that promotes performance and accountability. The requisite mechanism and framework for the implementation of the NEPAD's activities will encompass robust coordination by the Planning arm of the organization. NEPAD all over Africa but particularly in Nigeria must as a matter of necessity come up with a Country Monitoring and Evaluation (CME) function that will coordinate with the state governments in Nigeria on the plan execution to involve data, monitoring and evaluation. No doubt, this will require enhanced capacity for effective oversight, tracking and funding.

Conclusion

Although majorly the African Development Bank has steadily supported the initiative, as observed by the bank's President, Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina who said; "The Bank's support has spanned many areas, such as in regional integration, agriculture, trade, infrastructure, education, knowledge and the environment. The African Development Bank stands fully ready to continue to provide strong support and to help to mobilize a lot more support for AUDA-NEPAD as you continue your new strategy and of course the African Union Commission. Together we will achieve the Africa we want, better and much faster" (J. Uche 2021). There's still much that needed to be done. For instance, the Africa Research Bulletin (2004), revealed that Nigeria's agricultural production is still characterized by several challenges such as uncertain rainfall, nutritional deficiencies in soils, small and dispersed domestic markets, instability and a decline in world prices for African agricultural exports, small size of most farms, farmers' frequent lack of organization, lack of rural roads, neglect of the particular needs of women farmers, the spread of HIV/AIDS, poor government agricultural policies, low investment in farming sector and lack of technological apparatus. This for me should be the major essence of the

partnership. NEPAD seems irrelevant when it cannot ensure that it comes up with a multinational corporation strategic plan that can set at least agriculture on the path of growth in Africa (Africa Research Bulletin 2004).

However, I strongly, agree with a vast range of civil society groups and scholars who believe that the NEPAD initiative failed to impact on Nigeria's economic development for several reasons as demonstrated in this study. Going from the level of corruption inherent in the system to the lack of strong institutions, to the over-dependence on foreign donors without taking cognizance of uncertainty and priorities of the donor's government and institutions. In addition, most Africans down to the country level, policies and programme are formulated on the wrong footing by not taking into account the idiosyncrasies of individual states or countries, because what works in Nigeria, might not work elsewhere. The New Partnership for Africa's Development in my view should be domesticated into the Nigerian Government's Development plan whilst ensuring that more capacity is built to adequately fulfill its objectives satisfactorily.

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