

# **The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM): African Solutions to African Problems?**

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## **Abstract**

NEPAD is an initiative of African leaders with the objective of seeking African solutions to the security and development challenges of the African continent. Given this laudable objective, this paper employed both primary and secondary sources to assess the performance of NEPAD and its major instrument – the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The paper observed that NEPAD has succeeded to some extents in making Africa more transparent and consequently, secure debt relief and Official Development Assistance, amongst other things. However, NEPAD and APRM are challenged by a number of factors, with finance being the biggest threat to keeping the laudable idea chiefly an African affair. There is also the lack of enforcing APRM findings and recommendations after peer review processes. The study concluded that for NEPAD and APRM to avoid extra-African interference from donor countries, objectives and programmes must be cut down to financially manageable numbers. Other recommendations include that member states must accept the results of the peer review in good faith and strive to improve on their areas of deficiency. While peer pressure must be used to bring about compliance to reviews and recommendations, peer reviews must be fair, transparent and friendly.

**Keywords:** Africa, Development, Mechanism, Partnership, Peer Review,

## **Introduction**

The phrase “African solutions to African problems” is traceable to the late 1950s, from the time when African States started gaining their independence. It however became more widespread and popular in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, as many Africans lost faith in the ability of the United Nations and extra-African forces and/or governments to help Africa solve her problems (Goldmann, 2005, p. 459). Similarly, the Somalia incident of 1993 gave a clearer indication that the Western World could not be trusted to take African problems seriously. The United States (US) under the leadership of President Bill Clinton had been convinced to follow the UN in “an unprecedented enterprise aimed at the restoration of Somalia” (Hirsch & Oakley,

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1995, p.111). But after the Mogadishu battle that resulted in the death of 18 U.S. servicemen and about 1,000 Somalis, the U.S. declared that “it is not our job to rebuild Somalia’s society.” A decade after, the activities of pirates operating off Somalia’s coast of Arden, made Somalia the greatest threat to the security and political economics of not only Africa but also, the international community.

The disappointment Africans feel towards the international community becomes magnified when it comes to policy articulation and developmental objectives. Shortly after the independence of some African countries in the early 1960s, African leaders formed the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) in 1963. Amongst other objectives, the OAU was to spearhead Africa’s developmental objectives. One of earliest of these development objectives was the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA), which was adopted by the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government (AHG) in 1980.

Interestingly, the LPA was birthed at the time Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), a development agenda of the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) was forced on poor countries in and outside Africa. Naturally, the development ideals of the BWIs contrasted those engineered by African leaders themselves. The development agenda of the Africa leaders suffered because foreign donors, who are of course members or offshoot agencies of the BWIs, chose to ignore or refuse to fund projects (Ake, 1996, p.25). In order to cushion the effects of SAP on African States, African leaders again met in March 1988, in Khartoum – Sudan, to design an alternative economic blueprint to counter the effects of SAP. In 1989, African-Alternative Framework to the Structural Adjustment Programme (AAF-SAP), was formulated. Expectedly, this again was abandoned for the same reason the LPA and other such programmes were dumped.

As Adedeji (2002, p. 4) noted, the development plans of African leaders were

... opposed, undermined and jettisoned by the Bretton Woods institutions; and, Africans were thus impeded from exercising the basic and fundamental right to make decisions about their future....lacking the resources and the will to soldier on self-reliantly, they abandoned their own strategies....

Rather than deter African leaders, the opposition by the Bretton Woods Institutions made their resolve to look inwards even stronger. To this end, African leaders decided to seek new African solutions to African problems. Consequently, in 2001, African leaders launched a development programme tagged, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). NEPAD’S objective is simple to put an end to Africa’s poverty and underdevelopment. The core objective of this new programme is the monitoring of governance throughout the continent using the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

It is well over a decade since the formation of these two instruments. It thus becomes necessary to investigate the success and failures of these two instruments in order to determine how successful Africans have been in proffering African solutions to African problems.

## **Objectives of the Study**

This study is aimed at achieving the following set goals

- a. To highlight the objectives of NEPAD in relation with its operational strategies in reaching the African Countries
- b. To examine the factors militating against its functional operations and possible remedy in that regard
- c. To proffer workable mechanism by which it can effectively get at its goals of practical development of the African Countries

### **The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)**

The origin of NEPAD is traceable to three different initiatives at the turn of the century. The first initiative is credited to President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, who in the late 1990s, coined and popularised the catchword 'the African Renaissance' – a concept partly rooted in various elements of earlier philosophical discourses on Pan Africanism, Negritude, Ubuntu and Black Consciousness (Melber, 2002, p. 186). President Mbeki subsequently presented the *Millennium Africa Renaissance Programme* (MAP) to the World Economic Forum Meeting in Davos on January 28, 2001. The second initiative, the *Omega Plan*, was crafted by the then President of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade. It was presented to the Summit of Francophone African leaders in Cameroon in January 2001. The third of these initiatives, *The Compact for African Recovery* was initiated by the then Executive Secretary of ECA, K.Y. Amoako. This was in response to a mandate provided by African Ministers of Finance in late 2000 (RCM-Africa, 2007).

In 1999, the Extraordinary OAU Summit in Sirte, mandated the South African, Nigerian and Algerian presidents to approach Africa's creditors on the total cancellation of Africa's external debt. Similar mandate was again given during the OAU Summit in Togo (July 2000) to the same presidents to prepare the Millennium African Recovery Programme. It was from this document that the Heads of State at the OAU Summit meeting, on 11 July 2001, adopted 'A New African Initiative' (NAI). At the end of a meeting in Abuja on 23 October 2001, an Implementation Committee of Heads of State renamed the modified document as 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development' (NEPAD) (Melber, 2002, p. 186).

The NEPAD was adopted by the African Heads of states unanimously, and by so doing agreed on the basis of a common vision and a firm and shared conviction to eradicate poverty and place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development, while participating actively in the world economy and body politic. In order to execute its function, Personal Representatives of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government constitute the Steering Committee. This committee is responsible for overseeing projects and managing the development and execution of programmes. The NEPAD Secretariat coordinates projects and programmes implementation approved by the HSGIC, while reports are sent by the HSIC to the AU Summit on an annual basis.

### **NEPAD's Programmes and Activities**

There is no doubt that NEPAD's programme and projects are well articulated. The NEPAD's 128 page document on Action Plan of the Environment Initiative (2003) would impress any scholar. This is indeed a noble stride for the African continent, but NEPAD may have taken a little too much in the form of programmes and objectives. In order to achieve NEPAD's objectives, African leaders declare their joint responsibility for the under-listed goals and tasks which was summarised by Melber (2002, p. 191) from Article 49 of NEPAD's base document to include:

- a). strengthening mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution and ensuring that they are used to restore and maintain peace;
- b). Promoting and protecting democracy and human rights by developing clear standards of accountability, transparency and participative governance;
- c). Restoring and maintaining macroeconomic stability by developing standards and targets for fiscal and monetary policies and appropriate institutional frameworks;
- d). Instituting transparent legal and regulatory frameworks for financial markets and auditing of private companies and the public sector;
- e). Revitalising and extending the provision of education, technical training and health services (with priority to HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases);
- f). Promoting the role of women in social and economic development;
- g). Building the capacity of the African

states to set and enforce the legal framework and to maintain law and order; and h), promoting the development of infrastructure, agriculture and its diversification.

### **The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)**

NEPAD's most important instrument is perhaps the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), it was established in 2003. Participating AU member States acceded to it voluntarily. The basic objective of the mechanism is to determine the extent to which participating countries are complying with agreed development ideals. A country has to formally ratify the African Union Declaration Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) adopted in Durban in July 2002 before it can join in the peer review process. Pagani (2002, p.15) defined peer review as:

a systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a state by other states, with the ultimate goal of helping the reviewed state improve its policy making, adopting best practices and comply with established standards and principles.

The author distinguished peer review from judicial proceedings, fact-finding missions, and reporting and data collection, which are other mechanisms for monitoring and ensuring compliance with internationally agreed policies. Peer review differs from judicial proceedings since the final outcome is not a binding act or a legal judgment by a supreme body. The fact-finding missions, the objective of which is to investigate specific events or establish facts, differ from peer review as the latter goes beyond fact-finding to assess the performance of a state. Finally, reporting and data collection can be useful components of a peer review, but these are not peer review per se.

APRM's primary concern is to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that will help participating countries attain greater political stability, high economic growth, and sustainable development. It is also to ensure accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful best practices (APRM 2011, p. 2).

The Mechanism of the APRM is run by three main institutions, the APR Forum, the Panel of Eminent Persons (APR Panel) and APRM Secretariat. The APR Forum is composed of Heads of State and Government of member countries. It is the highest decision-making body of APRM and meets twice a year. The Panel of Eminent Persons (APR Panel) is appointed by the APRM Forum to independently oversee the review process in order to ensure its integrity, to consider review reports and make recommendations to the Forum. Similarly, the APRM Secretariat based in the Midrand, South Africa provides the organ with technical, administrative and logistics support. Important functions of the secretariat include holding and updating database of the political, economic and social situation of its member States. It also serves to process performance indicators and analyses the results of member States. Basically, the APRM has outlined four processes to be reviewed. They are: i) democracy and political governance; ii) economic governance and management; iii) corporate governance and iv) socio-economic development.

### **Achievements of NEPAD AND APRM**

There is no doubt that NEPAD and its instrument, the APRM, have been beneficial to Africans and the world at large. Some of the merits are outlined below.

#### **Official Development Assistance (ODA)**

APRM has indeed enabled African countries to garner substantial increase in Official Development Assistance (ODA). This has increased from \$22.2 billion in 2002 to \$26.3 in 2003

to \$35.2 billion in 2005. Additionally, Africa's development partners have made commitments to increase development assistance. As an example, members of the EU pledged to double their assistance to Africa between 2004 and 2010. Fifteen (15) members of EU agreed to increase their ODA/GDP ratio to at least 0.56 per cent by 2010, with the understanding that the 0.7 per cent goal enshrined in the Monterrey Declaration could be achieved by 2015 (RCM-Africa, 2007).

Additionally, the NEPAD process has resulted in increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for African countries. According to a World Bank (2006) report, FDI flow into Africa increased substantially from \$15 billion in 2003 to \$31 billion in 2005.

### **Debt relief**

The importance of a debt free Africa cannot be overestimated. Rather than spend close to one-third of its resources services debts, African countries can channel its resources fully to its development goals. The NEPAD and its instrument, the APRM, have secured substantial debt relief for African countries. This it achieved through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt relief programme, securing cancellation of all the debts of 14 African countries from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Similarly, the Paris Club of creditors gave Nigeria a special debt relief package that is estimated at about \$18 billion.

### **People-centric Programmes**

NEPAD has generally improved its programmes and activities to become more people-centric. This can be deduced from studying NEPAD Annual Report 2016. This was detailed effectively under such topics as: i) governance of natural resources and food security; ii) skills and employment opportunities for youth; and iii) regional integration: infrastructure and trade. An example of the people-centric policy of NEPAD is its natural resources and food security programme. This lofty vision of the AU and by extension, NEPAD aimed at "supporting 25 million farming households to deploy Climate Smart Agricultural practices by 2025". This development prompted the G8 leadership at the G8 Summit at Gleneagles (Scotland) to agree to increase aid to Africa by \$25 billion per annum by 2010. The G8 countries have individually also committed to earmark 0.7 per cent of their national income (GNI) for aid by 2015 (G8 Gleneagles Report, 2005, p. 16).

### **Transparency**

In the absence of anything else, African leaders deserve some credit for agreeing to a peer review programme. It shows, to some extent, a commitment to tackling good governance challenges in the continent. This will in turn address socio-economic challenges when it becomes a benchmark for measuring levels of adherence to set goals for Africans and her international partners.

The idea to monitor set goals is important, especially in the arena of national politics where violent conflicts thrive. The nine objectives under "democracy and political governance" of the APRM remain very significant for African continent. Outlined by APRM-OSCI (2003, pp. 5-6), the objectives include:

Prevention and reduction of intra- and inter-country conflicts; Promotion of constitutional democracy, including periodic political competition and opportunity for choice, the rule of law, a Bill of Rights and the supremacy of the Constitution; Promotion and protection of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights as enshrined in all African and international human rights instruments; Upholding the separation of powers, including the protection of the independence of the judiciary and of an effective Parliament; Ensure accountable, efficient and effective public office holders and civil servants; Fighting

corruption in the political sphere; Promotion and protection of the rights of women; Promotion and protection of the rights of the child and young persons; and Promotion and protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, including internally displaced persons and refugees.

Although the implementation may differ, the objectives provide general accountability for good governance and opportunities for shared experience.

## **Challenges and Miscarriages of NEPAD and APRM**

### **A). The Challenges**

In its quest to proffer purely African solutions to the continent's problems, NEPAD has had challenges and failures that are comparable to its successes and achievements. Some of them are discussed below.

#### **NEPAD and African Security**

NEPAD's commitment to African security is often neglected by scholars. Yet, the importance NEPAD places on African security can be seen on the first bullet point on NEPAD's Programmes and Activities above. It must have been on this premise that former South African President Thabo Mbeki visited President Bush in June, 2005 and sought to silence any suggestion that extra-Africans troops should be involved to halt the genocide in Darfur. In a reported credited to Rice (2009), Mbeki had declared:

It's critically important that the African continent should deal with these conflict situations on the continent... And that includes Darfur. . . . We have not asked for anybody outside of the African continent to deploy troops in Darfur. It's an African responsibility, and we can do it.

As Rice (2009) put it, Mbeki was expressing the laudable desire of many African governments to solve African problems themselves. She also noted that a major part of their motive is pride and self-reliance, but that they (African nations) still lacks the robust military capability to achieve this aspiration. In line with her argument, several theatres of war are being executed on the African continent without effective African response. In the Darfur region for instance, several killing and burning of villages are reported almost on weekly bases. In Nigeria, Boko Haram insurgency, have killed thousands of people with no effective response for several years now. Similarly, Somalia is almost becoming a fail state with no standing government due to insecurity. Where then is the African response to African problem? The countries concern, nay the AU have not been able to do much in arresting militia operations within its domain because it does not have a standby military force that can adequately check these menace.

#### **Financial Limitations**

Another failing of NEPAD is the lack of adequate resources by African countries to carry out its objectives. Each participating African country is required to contribute a minimum of \$100, 000 for the running of just the APRM. This does not include other programmes of NEPAD or even the running of APRM review process at the country level. Many African countries cannot fund the APRM process on their own. Although the richer countries can take on more financial responsibility, the fear is that it will jeopardise the principle of sovereign equality and usher in "big brother syndrome" .

## **The Complex Structure of NEPAD**

NEPAD is a complex continental institution. It has no implementation organ but relies on member States and RECs to carry out its programmes. However, the role and responsibility of member States and RECs are not properly defined with specific communication channels. A good example is the fact that it is not clear if the responsibility for programmes and projects rests with HSGIC, the Steering Committee, the Secretariat, RECs, or member States. This can cause the duplicity of roles and efforts, leading to confusion and counter-productivity. It can thus be concluded that NEPAD and its instrument, the APRM are structurally flawed. It was in recognition of this complication that the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) was immediately established after it was integrated into the AU structure. Hopefully, this will help to reduce the problems that arise from its structural deficiency.

### **Ambitious Programmes and Activities**

Indeed, there is no shortage of programmes for NEPAD. This is understandable as NEPAD is anxious to fix many of Africa's problems. The programmes ranged from launching a development forum like: a) Youth Economic Empowerment and skills Development, b. Rural Development – Policies and Institutions, c) Rural Infrastructure and ICT, to d) Green Economy and job creation in advancing Rural Development in Africa. This multiplicity of programmes and activities may be one of its greatest shortcomings because, if NEPAD takes a little too much for itself, fulfilling its objectives may be difficult if not impossible.

### **B).The Miscarriages**

#### **An African affair still dependent on external aid**

APRM's strongest point is that it is entirely an African affair. However, NEPAD (its parent organisation), is expected to execute its projects and programmes with about \$64 billion each year and this money is expected to be raised through aid and fairer trade. Aid component is expected to come from developed countries. It is also expected that the same countries will "make the international trade regime fairer, thereby generate more income for Africa" (Bing-Pappoe, 2010, p. 3). It is on this premise that Olukushi (2002, p. 9) discredited NEPAD, calling it a donor imposed development repackaged plan that hides under alleged African ownership.

One of NEPAD's Mission is to "work with African countries, both individually and collectively towards sustainable growth and development" (NEPAD, 2016). This is obviously not the entire truth. NEPAD indeed works with and aspires to be patronized heavily by Western Countries. For instance, NEPAD's logo/trademark is advertised along with those of World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Development Program (UNDP) World Bank, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, US President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR), Gavi (The Vaccine Alliance), Department for International Development, Swiss Medic, The World Bank and lastly, African Union (AU). These advertisements are made to credit the organisations in obvious pursuit of cooperation and funding for NEPAD.

It can therefore be seen that NEPAD and APRM are not strictly speaking, African solution to African problems. Without generous aid and trade assistance from rich countries of the North, NEPAD and its affiliates would not function effectively. On this note, Adedeji (2002, p.8) cautioned:

Quite understandably the NEPAD song is at present more soothing to the ears of the West than that of the LPA. The development merchant system (DMS) and its marabous appear to have been re-energised and the two gap model of economic growth, which drew African countries into the debt trap, has been reactivated and

rejuvenated. The protagonists of NEPAD should never forget that it was this model that exacerbated the dependency syndrome of the African economies and at the same time led to mass pauperisation and deprivation of the African people.

Additionally, the cost of running NPoA is prohibitive. Member countries that have acceded to the peer review may have some difficulty in carrying out the process. This can be seen from the table 1.

Table 1: Financial Cost of the National Programme of Action for some countries (NPoAs) (US\$m)

<b>Country</b>	<b>Democracy and Political Governance</b>	<b>Economic Governance and Management</b>	<b>Corporate Governance</b>	<b>Socio- Economic Development</b>	<b>Cross Cutting Issues</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Ghana</b>	118	179	2,236	1,120		3,653
<b>Kenya</b>	9	46	4,946	387		5,388
<b>South Africa</b>	143	219	29	1,594		1,986
<b>Benin</b>	586	7	1,004	758	33	2,389
<b>Nigeria</b>	5000	4,000	3,000	8,000		20,000
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	414	160	2,750	1,583		4,907
<b>Ethiopia</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Sources:** Bing-Pappoe (2010, p. 8), Figures rounded up to the nearest \$ million.

These figures appear unimpressive until we compare them with each country's GDP. For countries like Benin, Ghana and Kenya, the NPoA figures is approximately about 13%, 5.6% and 5.9% of their respective GDP. For some other like Nigeria, 3.4% equivalent of her GDP is expended on the NPoA. South Africa has the smallest investment of \$1.9bn. This figure is relatively small, representing 0.2% of South Africa's GDP (Bing-Pappoe, 2010, p. 9). In addition to this, participating countries are mandated to contribute \$100,000 per annum to the running of APRM's and to see to the smooth operations of their own national secretariats. This also means that they may concede to various pressures from international donor agencies in order to meet up with APRM's objective. This defeats the whole aim of the APRM process.

Currently, only 30 of the 53 AU member States have acceded to the APRM. They include; Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia. Out of these, 14 countries have already been reviewed (APRM, 2011, p. 2). The problem may not be unconnected with the cost of implementing the APRM process.

## **Beyond the Review**



Not later than six months after a country's assessment reports are discussed at APRM forums, it is sent to the APR Forum of Heads of State and Government, who will in turn submitted it to sub-regional and regional institutions. Other institutions entitled to have a copy of the review include the Pan-African Parliament, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Peace and Security Council and the African Union Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC). The reports are subsequently made available to the public (APRM, 2011, p. 2).

But there are questions: what happens after the review? How are the recommendations implemented? Are there consequences for erring States besides the publicity of the findings of the review? From the onset, issues of political governance and human rights were questioned in the APRM structure. This almost truncated the noble project in late 2002. This is a sensitive issue given Africa's poor disposition towards democracy, good governance and human rights protection. It has been discovered that what most of the NPoA member countries ascribe to are already part of their national plan. There is therefore little or no room to structurally improve themselves even with the review.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The idea to seek African solution to African problems has come to stay, but the implementation is confronted with lots of constraints. The noble goal is forestalled by a number of factors, chief among them being financial resources which make NEPAD depend on external sources for funds. This dependence seems to be defeating the essence of the original idea itself. Other limitations include the fact that there are too many programmes and objectives, and lack of political/moral will to follow up agendas and peer reviews, etc.

In order to enhance the chances of achieving NEPAD and APRM laudable goals, the under-listed recommendations are proffered:

1. Financial resources play a huge role in the process of planning and execution of the objectives of NEPAD and by extension, AU. Rather than mortgage the whole programmes by sourcing and acceptance of foreign aids, NEPAD and APRM may have to look inwards and avoid taking on too many projects and programmes at a time.
2. The APRM is a voluntary peer review mechanism and like many voluntary associations or programmes, it is subject to the whims and caprices of the members States. In line with this, more AU members should endeavour to accede to the APRM, accept the results of the peer review in good faith and strive to improve on their areas of deficiency.
3. African leaders need to understand that peer reviews must be fair, transparent and friendly in order to succeed. In addition to this, reporting and criticism may be critical, but not damning and damaging.
4. After the review process, implementation is necessary to realize the recommendations of the review committee for stronger democracy and development.
5. Since it is difficult (if not impossible) to have a decision enforcing body for APRM recommendations, increased focus on peer pressure in the form of dialogue or public scrutiny, comparative ranking, may be encouraged.
6. It is also recommended that a sixth stage may be added to the peer review process. This stage is the Peer Review of the implementation of the National Programme of Action (NPoA).
7. Stemming from the above, there is the need to state the role of the CSOs in the peer review process in order to enable them to have clear guidelines, broad-base and inclusive participation in the "Program of Action" (PoA) process.

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