

The New Partnership for Africa's Development

Four years of a promising attempt or hollow optimism?

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Introduction

In the introduction to his book *What went wrong with Africa*, Roel van der Veen writes:

The last fifty years have seen unprecedented changes in people's standards of life all over the world. ... Though poverty was the norm throughout human history, for many people a degree of prosperity came within reach. ... except in Africa.¹

After analysing socio-economic conditions on the continent, Van der Veen concludes: "Even a confirmed optimist would hesitate to predict that life in Africa will get better in years ahead."² Unfortunately, statistics seem to bear him out. More than half of Africa's population live on less than one dollar a day. While Africa is home to about 12% of the world's population, the continent produces less than 5% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP). In global trade terms, the continent is almost a non-participant accounting for less than 3% of current global trade. While Africa stagnates, other developing countries (especially in East Asia) are benefiting from globalisation through technological innovations and improved productivity. Poverty, not prosperity, is Africa's defining characteristic: epidemics such as malaria and tuberculosis are ubiquitous while the HIV/Aids pandemic rages on, decimating the continent's human resources.

Yet Africans remain resilient. They continue to struggle and hope for a better life even under the most difficult conditions. A handful of leaders relentlessly persist in seeking solutions to Africa's perennial problems. The most recent and encouraging of such attempts is the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). NEPAD has created a new sense of optimism that, indeed, life will be better in Africa in the years ahead. But the African continent has seen many socio-

economic initiatives that share similar objectives, although constructed under different circumstances. So why would NEPAD succeed where others have so patently failed? To answer this question we need to review recent history and the differences between previous initiatives and NEPAD. Another important question that this paper attempts to respond to is: How far is the implementation of NEPAD since the programme's inception?

More of the same?

Following on the Monrovia Declaration of the previous year, the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action embodied the notion of African ownership – of "self-reliance and self-sustain(ability)".³ Key to the Lagos Plan of Action and the subsequent Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community of 1991, is the concept of using the continent's sub-regional bodies as the building blocks of a continent-wide process of economic integration – a concept recently strongly revived by the African Union (AU) as part of its vision and mission. The Lagos Plan of Action sought to promote intra-African trade and economic growth; in

practice, however, it remains nothing more than "a statement of intent".⁴

Attempts to rekindle the momentum created by the Lagos Plan of Action were made in 1985 when the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Summit adopted the African Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER). While APPER was meant to revive the momentum created by the Lagos Plan of Action, it was largely a response to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank's structural adjustment programmes. Both the Lagos Plan of Action and APPER put the blame for the continent's economic quagmire on external forces, hence absolving African leaders from any responsibility.⁵ APPER was given international legitimacy when it was adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1986, leading to the UN

Different from previous plans, NEPAD calls upon African leaders to govern their countries better



Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. The nomenclature and substantive content of that programme closely resembles that of NEPAD.

Both the Lagos Plan of Action and APPER were conceived within the politics of the Cold War. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and of communism as an alternative ideological pole to that of the West presented new opportunities, and for a brief period of time appeared to hold the promise for a new, more equitable relationship between the North and the South. Common rules would now govern international relations, not the alignment of countries to one or other ideological camp – or so it appeared.

Responding to these truly momentous changes in global relations, African leaders crafted yet another economic recovery programme, the Abuja Treaty of 1991. Since “the international community had not fulfilled its obligations to African states”⁶ this inward-looking development approach sought to:

- promote economic, social and cultural development and the integration of African economies in order to increase economic self-reliance and promote endogenous and self-sustaining development;
- establish, on a continental scale, a framework for the development, mobilisation and utilisation of the human and material resources of Africa in order to achieve a self-reliant development;
- promote cooperation in all fields of human endeavour in order to raise the standard of living of African peoples, maintain and enhance economic stability, foster close and peaceful relations among member states and contribute to the progress, development and economic integration of the continent; and
- coordinate and harmonise policies among existing and future economic communities in order to foster the gradual establishment of the community.

Heads of state believed that the attainment of these objectives would facilitate the creation of an African Economic Community by 2025: an objective as distant in 2006 as it was in 1991 when the treaty was finalised.

NEPAD therefore did not come into existence in isolation but came about as a result of a number of initiatives and extensive consultations among a small group of African heads of state. The year 1999 was decisive in the sense that three key African leaders were at the helm of important multilateral forums: President Abdelaziz Boutaflika of Algeria served as

chairperson of the OAU; President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria was chairperson of the G-77; and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa served as chairperson of the Non-Aligned Movement. Boutaflika and Mbeki were originally tasked to develop strategies on how to deal with the challenges facing the continent in terms of its external debt, and it was against this background that Mbeki came up with the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme (MAP), roping in Obasanjo. While the trio was busy working on MAP, President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal produced his Omega Plan, which focused on the development of Africa’s rundown and insufficient infrastructure as a prerequisite to facilitate trade and development.

The plans (MAP and Omega) were subsequently referred to a group of experts for harmonisation before a single, integrated submission was made to the 2001 OAU Summit in Lusaka, Zambia, which adopted a harmonised plan – the New African Initiative (NAI) (a name decided on literally days before the summit). The NAI was further refined and changed into what is today known as NEPAD, as adopted in October 2001 by the 37th Summit of the OAU in Abuja, Nigeria and which was also adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2002.⁷

NEPAD’s key objective is to eradicate poverty

NEPAD architects have been at pains to dismiss suggestions that NEPAD was not conceptualised as an AU programme; however, it is no secret that the programme does not enjoy continent-wide political support. A number of African countries do not associate themselves with the Partnership and it is often only the leaders of the initiating states who beat the drum for NEPAD. Not surprisingly, NEPAD came up against resistance from others who saw it as a threat to their own national interests, and as an attempt by larger and more powerful countries to further entrench their domination.

According to its own documents, NEPAD is a “holistic, integrated sustainable development initiative for the economic and social revival of Africa involving a constructive partnership between the continent and the West”.⁸ NEPAD objectives are, among others, to:

- half poverty in Africa by 2015;
- increase foreign direct investment for all African countries by creating an attractive investment climate;
- achieve an average annual GDP growth rate of at least 7%;
- increase official development assistance (ODA) for least developed African countries;
- lobby for debt reduction for countries with unsustainable debt levels; and
- lobby for fairer trade terms for African countries.



The NEPAD framework has the following segments:

- Establishing the *necessary conditions* for development: this includes ensuring that there is peace, security and good governance on the continent.
- Identification of key *priority sectors*: this includes agriculture and food security, trade and market access, infrastructure development, human development including health and education, science and technology, culture, environment and tourism.
- *Resource mobilisation*: this includes mobilising domestic investment as well as seeking external technical and material support.⁹

This admittedly brief review sets the stage to highlight three critical changes in the tone and content of NEPAD as opposed to its predecessors: these relate to the changed international context within which NEPAD is located; its practical modalities; and the inclusion of good governance as a central plank within NEPAD through the African Peer Review Mechanism. Each is discussed separately below.

NEPAD and the global context

NEPAD accepts globalisation as the new economic reality and, different to the inward looking strategies of the past, argues for Africa to position itself within the global context or face further marginalisation. Since NEPAD's inception, criticism has been levelled at leaders for introducing what some call a plan that "fits the neo-liberal discourse and avoids blaming particular policies or global trade structures on Africa's marginalisation ...".¹⁰

Since the 1990s activists have used the term 'neoliberalism' as (not entirely accurate) shorthand for global market-liberalism, capitalism or free-trade policies. The most general tendency is to use the term neoliberalism interchangeably with globalisation and to elevate it to the status of an all-encompassing ideological framework in which "...[n]eoliberalism is not just economics: it is a social and moral philosophy, in some aspects qualitatively different from liberalism".¹¹ For his detractors, Mbeki and his co-conspirators serve as a Trojan horse for the subjugation of Africa to the dictates of the Washington consensus and the neo-liberal concepts that mean:

... a set of economic policies that have become widespread during the last 25 years or so. Although the word is rarely heard in the United States, you can clearly see the effects of neo-liberalism here as the rich grow richer and the poor grow poorer... . Around the world,

neo-liberalism has been imposed by powerful financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. ... the capitalist crisis over the last 25 years, with its shrinking profit rates, inspired the corporate elite to revive economic liberalism. That's what makes it 'neo' or new.¹²

Perhaps the problem with these views is the effort to associate and then discredit everything that can be associated with neo-liberalism without a balanced assessment of the constituent parts. For example, as an economic system, it is true that a neo-liberal economic system hinges on private enterprise (the market), but the private sector is not intrinsically bad. In fact, it is largely private capital flows that have lifted hundreds of millions of Chinese and Indians out of poverty in recent years. Furthermore, as a socio-political system, neo-liberalism manifests itself in the premium that society places on the rights of 'the individual' and the protection of a set of individual and political rights – rights and obligations that underpin much of the advances that the world has seen in terms of human rights and democracy.

Is NEPAD a neo-liberal programme par excellence?

Particularly damaging in this 'all or nothing' ideological debate has been the linkages and similarities often drawn between NEPAD with the discredited way in which the structural adjustment programmes have been applied in Africa. Emphasis on attracting ODA as a necessary precondition to kick-start Africa's development – and the eventual ability to attract private investment flows – leads to the conclusion that the programme "underestimates the deleterious impact of donor-

led development programs in Africa ...",¹³ which is compounded by the emphasis that the NEPAD framework places on the importance of "attracting private sector investors".¹⁴ The NEPAD architects argue that public-private partnerships (PPPs) should play an increasingly important role since these are "... a promising vehicle for attracting private investors, and focus public funding on the pressing needs of the poor, by building capacity to implement and monitor such agreements".¹⁵ In this regard, they argue, projects should in practice aim at developing and promoting:

- infrastructure, especially information and communication technologies;
- human resources, including education, skills development and reversing the brain drain;
- health;
- agriculture; and
- access to the markets of developed countries for African exports.¹⁶

Such partnerships between the public and private sectors are not typical of the type of neo-liberal stereotyping that often characterises discussions on NEPAD. Similarly, the focus that NEPAD places on strengthening the capacity of governments to implement projects as well as to monitor private sector projects is at odds with structural adjustment programmes, which clearly discourage public spending on social services such as health and education and instead promote outsourcing and smaller government. NEPAD argues for the reverse, emphasising development of infrastructure such as roads, railways, ports and schools.

One of the more insightful critics is Ian Taylor who argues that: "NEPAD might be seen as a reaction to, and stemming from, an environment in which the West has seemingly disengaged from the continent and from a globalising world that appears to be leaving Africa behind."¹⁷ The question NEPAD initiators seem to have battled with is: How does Africa relate to globalisation? For Taylor, the neo-liberal agenda that the architects of NEPAD "... seek to push holds within it seeds for a further marginalisation of the majority of Africa's peoples whilst granting a highly privileged strata of African elites the potential to benefit from the ongoing globalisation process"¹⁸ Ironically, this is exactly what NEPAD aims to reverse – leading to the inevitable conclusion that the debate about NEPAD and its critics is more a reflection of the ideological orientation of the critic than of the programme.

However important, the failure or success of NEPAD does not only depend on the global environment: domestic conditions such as issues of political and economic governance, mobilising local investment, investing in human resource and skills development, promoting local entrepreneurship, encouraging technological innovation and productivity, as well as a range of other domestic measures are also important. Africans do influence their own destiny.

In summary, the evidence that NEPAD is simply a neo-liberal project is unhelpful and detracts rather than informs analysis. Clearly NEPAD accepts the realities of globalisation, calls for increased ODA and aims for Africa to insert itself within the global economy rather than the reverse.

Structure, leadership and progress

Apart from a changed orientation to the current international context (namely, globalisation), NEPAD differs from previous African initiative plans most markedly in its well-defined leadership and administrative structures. Planning and talking is

buttressed by practical mechanisms to effect implementation and monitoring that were absent from the rhetorical gestures of the Lagos Plan and the Abuja Treaty.¹⁹ Hence, the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC)²⁰ takes overall responsibility for the political leadership of the Partnership. The HSGIC also serves as the political nexus between the AU and NEPAD, and reports to the AU Summit of Heads of State and Government at least once a year. The Committee meets three times a year to monitor and guide the implementation of NEPAD. Indicative of its character as a continental programme, four countries represent each of the five regions of the AU on the HSGIC.

Reporting directly to the HSGIC, a Steering Committee brings together the personal representatives of the heads of state and government who sit on the HSGIC. While NEPAD officials present the Steering Committee as a structure tasked with "developing the Terms of Reference for the identified programmes and projects and with overseeing the work of the Secretariat", most analysts contend that the Steering Committee

exercises considerable political power within NEPAD as it determines the agenda of the HSGIC and is composed of the personal representatives of heads of state. With direct access to the HSGIC – which is essentially a collection of the most powerful and influential leaders from each of Africa's regions – the Steering Committee is able to bypass the structures and processes of the AU Commission. This direct access and subsequent inability of the AU Commission to exercise full control of the NEPAD agenda has often been a source of tension between the NEPAD Secretariat and senior staff of the Commission. It has, however, allowed

the NEPAD initiative to move much more quickly than would otherwise have been the case.

The primary role of the NEPAD Secretariat, located in Midrand South Africa, is to provide administrative and coordinative support to the NEPAD process. Its officials organise meetings for heads of state and also hold meetings with important NEPAD stakeholders and partners. The organogram of the Secretariat reflects the thematic parameters of NEPAD's work. The office of the executive head (Prof. Firmino Mucavele and his deputy, Amb. Olukorede Willoughby) is assisted by coordinators/advisors who have facilitated and developed a range of sector plans and policies in the following areas:

- Market access and agriculture
- Health
- Science and technology
- Environment and technology

Should NEPAD aim for the insulation of Africa from the global economy?



- Education
- Water and sanitation
- Agriculture
- eAfrica commission
- Economics
- Private sector initiatives
- Gender and civil society organisations
- Governance (including peace and security)

There has been much discussion on the location of the Secretariat in South Africa. Despite a decision taken at the 2003 AU Summit in Maputo to integrate the Secretariat into the AU Commission in Addis Ababa, there does not appear to be any intention of doing so in the short term. Beyond the irritation of the AU Commission in having one of its key 'programmes' located on the other side of the continent, and with little real authority over an organisation that has direct access to key heads of state, most realise the success of NEPAD and the degree to which the personal engagement and support of South African President Mbeki enables this success.

Justifying why, from the outset, the OAU General Secretariat or the AU Commission was not placed at the centre of NEPAD considering that it was envisaged as a programme of the continent's principal political organ, the NEPAD initiators say:

Realising that it would be difficult for the Secretary-General to give adequate leadership and resources to this new initiative, at a time when he was managing the transition of the OAU to the AU, the promoters of NEPAD resolved to use resources of their own governments to carry the initiative in the short term.²¹

It is against this background that it was reported in 2002 that "Nigeria and South Africa have seconded officials to the NEPAD Secretariat. It is hoped that the other three countries on the Steering Committee will soon be in a position to do the same".²²

Clearly, the promoters of NEPAD made their assessment about the General Secretariat and resolved to use their own resources: they were not mandated or requested to do so by an OAU resolution.²³

Since the AU Commission conceptualises and coordinates AU programmes, one could expect NEPAD to be brought under the auspices of the Commissioner for Economic Affairs, who reports to the AU Commission chairperson. Yet NEPAD has its own secretariat headed by a chief executive – even though it is often said that these "arrangements are transitional".²⁴ The upshot of this is an unhealthy

tension between the NEPAD Secretariat and the AU Commission.

It was with a view to mitigating this tension, among other reasons, that calls were made for the NEPAD Secretariat to be physically incorporated into the AU Commission. These calls culminated in the AU Summit in Maputo, Mozambique during July 2003, at which it was decided that the Secretariat be incorporated into the AU Commission within three years. Since the AU Summit is the highest decision-making organ of the AU, no other organ can reverse decisions taken at that level without a Summit mandate; hence the innovative interpretation by NEPAD that the decision did not imply physical relocation, but the "review of the contents of NEPAD programmes and the portfolio of the African Union as well as integration of the processes and structures".²⁵

In this process the direct access between the Secretariat and key heads of state through the HSGIC has proven very helpful indeed. The HSGIC meeting in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt on 19 April 2005 mandated President Obasanjo to study existing proposals on the integration matter and thereafter advise the NEPAD Heads of State. As a result the ball is now in the HSGIC court and no longer with the AU Summit.

The NEPAD Secretariat will not move to Addis Ababa – maybe after Mbeki!

In a transparent attempt to moderate the often tense relationship between the AU Commission and the NEPAD Secretariat, it was decided at the Sharm El Sheikh meeting to give all AU commissioners ex-officio status on the NEPAD Steering Committee, as well as to extend HSGIC membership to the AU chairperson, Prof. Alfa Oumar Konare. These arrangements closed the political gap between the AU and NEPAD and have apparently

gone some way to reduce the tension between the AU and NEPAD – although to some it appears more like an integration of the AU into NEPAD and not the other way round. As for the NEPAD Secretariat staff in Midrand, confusion reigns supreme – there is no certainty about job security, especially for junior staff.

On the whole, evidence suggests that the Secretariat is not moving to Addis Ababa any time soon; perhaps only after Mbeki's departure from South Africa's presidency, at which point the entire viability of the NEPAD initiative could come under scrutiny – such is the degree to which the Partnership is associated with its key driving member.

If NEPAD is to be taken seriously it has to find the means to have African countries translate its plans into practical projects that would in the short and long term ameliorate the difficult conditions of ordinary Africans. This should be the most important barometer



for measuring the meaningfulness of the optimism created with the advent of the programme. Addressing a conference in 2002, former NEPAD Secretariat Chief Executive Prof. Wiseman Nkuhlu said: "We are now in the vital implementation stage of NEPAD where detailed, concrete and implementable programmes and projects are being developed for each of the priority areas identified under NEPAD."²⁶ In this regard, the question is: How far is implementation so far?

In fact, the true identity of NEPAD continues to elude many commentators. Most popular is the myth that NEPAD represents an elixir which can heal all the ills of Africa by immediate osmosis, and that its secrets are privy only to the Secretariat bureaucrats in Midrand. By implication these bureaucrats need to be omnipresent, dispensing their potions and implementing NEPAD projects across the continent.

The view that some 100 NEPAD Secretariat members can change the material conditions of Africa's impoverished millions is, of course, patently unrealistic. However, official documents by NEPAD architects describe it as a programme that "provides ... the overall strategic framework for engagement".²⁷ NEPAD is basically a policy framework and not an implementation agency: its leadership and administrative structures are nothing more than facilitation and monitoring agencies. The NEPAD workshops held in September 2005 in Angola and Zambia support this view:

The workshops were aimed at facilitating the integration of NEPAD priorities, targets and values into national development plans. Project specific implementation processes have been established and are being followed up by the NEPAD Secretariat.²⁸

In this sense, the NEPAD Secretariat, under the guidance of the HSGIC and the Steering Committee, facilitates policy harmonisation among African countries, while the countries themselves remain responsible for implementing the values, policies and projects. The countries may in some cases choose to implement their projects through private agents from the business sector, but this would be done on a service provider basis. In addition to its facilitation role, NEPAD structures provide political support and monitor implementation. It is a mistake to expect the NEPAD Secretariat to act as a project implementation agency.

The other role that NEPAD plays is that of mobilising resources to underwrite the implementation of projects and policies, but most of these resources are channelled into the implementing countries themselves in the form of loans or grants. Resources are only given directly to

the Secretariat if they are meant for strengthening the facilitation role of NEPAD structures.

The most common trend in countries committed to the Partnership, such as South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya, is to link national projects to NEPAD – sometimes even when the linkage is vague. For example, when a provincial road project was launched in South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal Premier Sbu Ndebele said at the time that he was doing so in the spirit of NEPAD. The 'Maputo corridor' project – a South African highway project linking that country with Mozambique – is also talked about in government circles as a NEPAD project: in reality its origin substantially predates NEPAD. The same question could be raised about the NEPAD West Africa Gas Pipeline project aimed at supplying clean and affordable energy from Nigeria to Benin, Togo and Ghana, which is largely private-sector driven. It should, however, be appreciated that NEPAD lead nations see themselves as being responsible for marketing the programme.

The starting point to assess the performance of NEPAD would be at the level of policy development as well as the development of implementation plans for projects. Proceeding from this starting point, it is understandable why Prof. Nkuhlu identified this stage as vital: one cannot see a NEPAD project being implemented before one sees its plan. To the credit of the NEPAD Secretariat a number of NEPAD policy documents have been produced, with the help of consultants. Perhaps the most important of these is the NEPAD Action Plan released in July 2002. Others include:

The view that NEPAD is the Secretariat in Midrand eclipses a proper understanding of the implementation challenges facing all African countries

- NEPAD Infrastructure Short-Term Action Plan, May 2002
- NEPAD Health Strategy, September 2003
- NEPAD Action Plan for the Environment Initiative, October 2003
- Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
- African Post-Conflict Reconstruction Framework, June 2005

On examining the implementation report presented by Prof. Nkuhlu to the 19 April 2005 HSGIC meeting in Sharm Sheik, Egypt, it would appear that progress has been registered regarding the development of an implementation roadmap for the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). The African Development Bank (AfDB), for example, is working with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on a US\$150 million programme to support water management and irrigation in Southern Africa. Promises for further project funding are beginning to come through. The World Bank is



also launching a US\$60 million multi-donor initiative to support agricultural initiatives in Central and West Africa. In addition, the World Bank has approved a grant for the NEPAD Secretariat and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to facilitate a process whereby African countries identify their most immediate agricultural needs. Furthermore, the World Bank has launched a preparatory programme for agricultural productivity in SADC, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). The AfDB has “approved the NERICA [New Rice for Africa] development project in seven West African countries for a total of \$33.5 million”.²⁹

Individual countries are also contributing to the implementation of the CAADP. For example: “The United States (US) Government is currently realigning its Initiative to End Hunger in Africa to support the CAADP agenda. The projected funding under the initiative is \$200 million per annum for a period of five years. The activities to be supported include enhancing agribusiness activities and market development.”³⁰

With regard to implementation of the Infrastructure Short-Term Action Plan, Prof. Nkuhlu reported that:

This West Africa Gas Pipeline, which aimed at supplying clean and affordable energy from Nigeria to Benin, Togo and Ghana for the economic growth of the ECOWAS region is progressing well under the guidance and collaborative leadership of a Steering Committee of Ministers, Project Implementation Committee that comprises representatives of the four countries; and Senior Management of Sponsors and Project Team comprising representatives of the companies who have invested in this project. On December 23, 2004, the companies Chevron Texaco, Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation, Shell and Takoradi Power Company (VRA) committed more than USD 500m towards the construction of the West African Gas Pipeline. To date 170 km of pipe has been manufactured and the first shipment to the region is scheduled for March 2005. Land acquisition and detailed engineering design are underway and full construction both onshore and offshore will be underway in the second half of 2005. First gas deliveries are expected in December 2006.³¹

Another project that has been implemented, albeit on a very small scale, is the e-School Initiative that seeks to provide information and communication technologies at selected schools. Twenty countries were identified for the project, which was launched in the second half of 2005. At the time of writing, the project had been launched in the following countries:

- Uganda: 18 July 2005, Bugulumbya Secondary School.
- Ghana: 25 July 2005, Ola Girls’ Secondary School.
- Lesotho: 25 August 2005, Lesotho High School.
- Kenya: 27 September 2005, Isiolo Girls’ Secondary School.

Other projects/plans around which planning for implementation is under way include:

- *Education*: Distance Education and Teacher Training and Development project.
- *Environment*: Development of NEPAD Sub-Regional Environment Action Plans (SREAPs).
- *Tourism*: AU/NEPAD Tourism Action Plan.
- *Tourism*: Human Resources Development in Public Sector Tourism.
- *Science*: Design of science, technology and innovation indicators.
- *Science*: The African Biosciences Initiative.
- *Science*: Science and Technology Consolidated Action Plan.
- *Governance and public administration*: Launch of the African Management Development Institutes Network (AMDIN).

These are all fairly small projects and involve a range of African and external stakeholders. In some cases, the NEPAD Secretariat has facilitated the securing of financial resources for planning or implementation; however, little progress has been made in terms of implementation when compared to the other projects discussed above.³²

An overall assessment of implementation reveals that most NEPAD projects have not yet gone beyond a feasibility study; in most other instances, NEPAD is still trying to secure funding for feasibility studies.³³ Although it is still early days, a number of potential problems may arrest the implementation of projects. The most important of these is the lack of capacity on the part of NEPAD’s implementing agents, the regional economic communities (RECs) – including their member states. Originally, the RECs were expected to lead the implementation of regional projects, although there is a discernable shift in favour of commercially viable projects run as PPPs. This includes taking responsibility for project development, in some cases, as well as for technical planning and implementation monitoring. The skills challenges posed by these responsibilities cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, the expected implementation capacity at this level is grossly inadequate. It was this realisation that made the HSGIC in 2004 call for “the enhancement of the capacities of RECs for NEPAD implementation”.³⁴

While questions of capacity are critical, there are even more daunting hurdles on NEPAD’s implementation road – the question of funding! Early excitement was



based on the assumption that the so-called 'developed partners' would pump in the US\$64 billion needed to jumpstart NEPAD projects. While some funds have been forthcoming, the amplified level of rhetorical support for NEPAD has been poorly matched by real resource flows – and this is serving to undermine much of the Partnership's approach. It is against this background that President Mbeki called upon the beggar to throw something into his own begging bowl by proposing at the November 2004 HSGIC meeting that countries consider using their public servants' pension funds to finance NEPAD projects.³⁵ Realising the importance of leading by example, South Africa and Nigeria have made commitments to contribute US\$250 million each to a NEPAD infrastructure fund, although these two countries remain the only ones to have done so thus far.

All said and done, it is necessary to ponder the words of Prof. Nkuhlu upon his departure from the NEPAD Secretariat: "Evidence from other parts of the world shows that transformation processes of this kind can take decades or even generations. In the case of Africa this is an even more complex task, given that it is a continent of 53 countries that have to be transformed."³⁶

The African Peer Review Mechanism

Perhaps the most innovative feature of NEPAD is the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). For the first time in the collective history of the continent, African leaders introduced a governance instrument specifically targeted at domestic governance issues. Historically, issues of domestic political and economic governance had been taboo on the agenda of heads of state: the principle of sovereignty was key to the politics of African intergovernmental organisations. The APRM introduced a fundamental change in the sense that African countries (that accede) make a commitment to open up their books for review and to drive this process themselves. It is for this reason that most observers have often referred to the APRM as the one feature that makes NEPAD different when compared to the initiatives and plans discussed earlier.³⁷

The APRM is "... a system of voluntary self-assessment, constructive peer dialogue and persuasion, as well as the sharing of experiences among members ...".³⁸ The operationalisation of this system is based on the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance adopted by the 3rd HSGIC meeting in Rome, June 2002 and by the Durban AU Summit a month later. This followed a decision taken in 2001 in Abuja, Nigeria by the HSGIC to "set up parameters for good governance to guide their activities at both the political and economic levels". It is for this reason that the Declaration clearly identifies

four governance areas that should be the focus of reviews done under the APRM. These are:

- democracy and political governance;
- economic governance and management;
- corporate governance; and
- socio-economic development.

All countries that have acceded to the APRM are reviewed according to these governance areas, which have been identified as the preconditions for development on the continent. Each country under review goes through the following five stages:

- *Stage 1:* Establishment of the national focal point; sending out a questionnaire by the APR Secretariat; development of the country's self-assessment based on the questionnaire and preliminary Programme of Action; and the submission of these to the APR Secretariat. At this stage the Secretariat also prepares a background paper on the country for comparison with the self-assessment.
- *Stage 2:* The country review team visits the country under study to hold wide consultations with stakeholders. Where necessary, a country support mission visits the country before the review team in order to ensure that the country under review follows all APRM guidelines.
- *Stage 3:* Drafting of the report by the country review team.
- *Stage 4:* Submission of the country review team's report to the APR Secretariat, APR Panel and ultimately to the APRM Forum.
- *Stage 5:* This final stage involves making public the country's report and related recommendations, as well as the exercise of peer pressure.

The leadership structure of the APRM parallels that of NEPAD in a number of aspects. At the apex is the APRM Forum which comprises the leaders of all the countries that have acceded to the APRM.³⁹ This structure has the final word on reports emanating from a review process of any country. It is also this structure that, if necessary, exercises peer pressure.

Below the APRM Forum sits the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons (currently chaired by Amb. Bethuel Kiplagat from Kenya) comprising seven members appointed by the APRM Forum. These are persons of integrity who have played a role in one way or another in the development of the continent.

Then there is the APRM Secretariat, also based in Midrand and headed by an executive director, which provides administrative and coordinative support to the APRM process. The Secretariat has one thematic coordinator (TC) as the technical head of each of the four review areas. Two thematic researchers (TRs) support each TC, although the TR positions in the



economic, socio-economic and corporate divisions are currently vacant.⁴⁰

On paper there is no clear link between the leadership structure of the APRM and that of NEPAD. While the HSGIC serves as a link between NEPAD and the AU, there is no clarity as to the APRM's political leadership organ that reports to the HSGIC or the AU. It would be important for the NEPAD architects to think of creative ways of closing this gap. One way would be for the APRM Forum to report directly to the HSGIC, with the HSGIC then conveying APRM reports to the AU.

The process so far

According to the original plan, four countries were to be subjected to simultaneous review. The first countries identified were Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya and Mauritius. The process of reviewing a country was originally envisaged to take four months. As such, reports on the four countries should have been completed at the end of 2004. It was soon realised, however, that this timetable was unrealistic and overly ambitious, especially considering that this was a new process without precedent. The review processes in Ghana and Rwanda began in March 2004 and were completed in the same month the following year, with their reports formally presented at the APRM Forum meeting in Abuja on 19 June 2005. It is on the basis of this realisation that the time frame for a review has now been extended to nine months.

The review processes in Ghana and Rwanda generated particularly strong interest, having "faced the challenge of un-chartered waters".⁴¹ Other countries awaiting their reviews were keen to learn from the experiences of these two countries, while observers were anxious to see how tangible the results would be. It is for this reason that a summary of the processes in the two countries is necessary.

Ghana: A participatory process?

Ghana is one of the few NEPAD non-initiators that have demonstrated political seriousness not only about the APRM, but also about NEPAD in general. It is the only country that has established a ministry dedicated to NEPAD affairs, the Ministry of Regional Cooperation and NEPAD Cooperation. Almost all the other countries participating in NEPAD have centred their NEPAD focal points either in existing ministries or in their presidency offices. Ghana was also the first country to accede to the APRM, even ahead of the five NEPAD initiating states. The national APRM process has been located within the NEPAD ministry.

It has now dawned on APRM architects that the process is more cumbersome and takes longer than they expected

Ghana started its review process in March 2004. The process began with the establishment of a seven-member National/African Peer Review Mechanism Governing Council (NAPRM-GC) to take charge of the overall coordination of the APRM process in that country.⁴² Its members were drawn from across Ghana's diverse civil society, affording it unparalleled credibility. Moreover, the NAPRM-GC appointed independent research organisations to be the lead agencies in the four review areas – a practice subsequently adopted in South Africa.⁴³

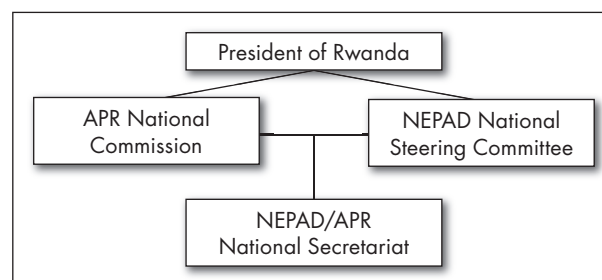
The value of having lead organisations on specific areas is that the organisations possess technical expertise and vast experience to conduct research and are also area specialists. The findings of organisations such as these tend to be more credible than research findings generated by government agencies. The work of the NAPRM-GC has been assisted by a small secretariat. The NAPRM-GC and the research organisations organised workshops and administered nationally adapted questionnaires across the country.

On the whole, Ghana's review process appears to have been a carefully thought out and administered exercise. The most important feature of the process is the political will to allow for unlimited participation of civil society. While the APRM Forum has not yet released Ghana's report for public consumption, media reports suggest that the country has been criticised for having a bloated cabinet and for not being stern with regard to the protection of the judiciary. It will be interesting to observe what Ghana will do to close the gaps identified by the review.

Rwanda: A review by the president?

Rwanda conducted its review almost simultaneously with Ghana, but located its NEPAD focal point and APRM activities in the Office of the President. The National APRM Commission was set up and inaugurated on 24 June 2004 to coordinate the activities of the

Structure of Rwanda's National APRM



Source: Ministry of Regional Cooperation and NEPAD Cooperation of the government of the Republic of Ghana, <www.ghana.gov.gh/governing/ministries/economy/planning.php>



national review process. Although a similar body to that of Ghana's, there are important differences. What remains unclear is the role of the steering committee as reflected in the structure below.

As was the case with Ghana, members of the Commission were drawn from the public. The difference, however, is that Rwanda did not make use of independent research organisations as lead agents in specific areas. The Commission was the lead facilitator of the process, also assisted by a small secretariat. In order to manage its work, the Commission constituted "a national technical review team for each of the four themes' thematic sub-commissions".⁴⁴ The only purpose for which the services of an independent organisation were solicited was at the end of the process in order to ensure quality control. This was ultimately validated by a national workshop. This workshop was, of course, preceded by numerous countrywide workshops on the basis of which the national report – submitted together with that of Ghana to the APRM Forum – was stitched together.

As is the case with that of Ghana, Rwanda's report has not yet been released for public access. Media reports suggest that institutional incapacity based on lack of resources is identified as one of Rwanda's key weaknesses. Having said this, some analysts have expressed concern at the centrality of the country's president in the review process. Again, it will be interesting to observe how the country will react in practice to the identified weaknesses.

The review process has generally proven to be cumbersome and has taken far longer than expected. It is now almost accepted that reviewing a country takes about nine months. This is largely due to the fact that even countries that have signed up to the APRM do not fully understand the process. As a result, there are a number of back-and-forth visits by APRM support teams to make countries undergoing review understand the process better. The fact that even countries which have dubious governance records and resist change (such as Sudan) are flocking to be included in the process is another indication of this lack of understanding. In this regard the Institute for Security Studies' Executive Director Jakkie Cilliers notes that: "There is ... no requirement for countries that accede to NEPAD and the APRM to meet predetermined standards, but rather a commitment to move towards common standards and practices ...".⁴⁵ Clearly, in-country stakeholder consultations are also not as easy as anticipated. At the current rate, it is therefore necessary not to be overly expectant of the process.

A key issue regarding the APRM is the matter of the benefits that would accrue to countries which have undertaken peer review.

Conclusion

Most, but not all, comments and criticisms regarding NEPAD and the APRM have been expressed by civil society organisations, many of them in Africa.⁴⁶

Admittedly, few African countries have opened up space for active civil society engagement on policy matters. As Timothy Murithi observes, generally there is "... an adversarial relationship between civil society and their governments".⁴⁷ Unfortunately, this is often contrary to the statements of commitment made by African leaders at continental and other fora. Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and analysts dismiss NEPAD as a top-down programme bound to fail;⁴⁸ others question the genesis of NEPAD and ask why civil society was not part of the process. It is within this context that Wameyo shares the following experience:

I had the privilege of being interviewed alongside a member of the NEPAD secretariat who reminded me that policy in Africa is made by leaders (read Presidents) and then passed on to people. It seems therefore that the ideology behind NEPAD is that of a plan prepared and delivered fully cooked to the African population. Civil society is viewed as almost irrelevant to the process⁴⁹

What will happen to NEPAD after Thabo Mbeki?

But what are the facts about the NEPAD process? As pointed out earlier, NEPAD emerged from meetings of heads of state and government. Considering the decision-making process of the AU (and NEPAD being an AU programme), what form would continent-wide civil society participation in the conceptualisation of NEPAD have taken, and how long would such a process have been? There have in fact been a series of civil society conferences hosted by the OAU/AU in recent years.

While the NEPAD framework document makes frequent reference to civil society, it does not provide for an official forum of engagement with civil society *per se*. As a result, most civil society activists find the process inaccessible despite efforts made by the NEPAD Secretariat over the past four years to hold meetings with and include civil society in its deliberations. In this regard, the Secretariat has created a civil society entry-point by appointing an official specifically placed to act as a bridge between NEPAD and civil society.

Despite the concerns, closer analysis would indicate that there has hardly been a NEPAD conference or

workshop where academics or NGOs were entirely unrepresented. Perhaps the latest, most high-profile of such jamborees was the multi-level stakeholder meeting convened in Sandton, South Africa from 22–23 October 2004 which was meant to review the implementation of NEPAD over the next three years. Interestingly, there are those who often question the representation of civil society in all NEPAD forums on the basis of its personal absence therein.

The debate on how to spread the activities and further expand the engagement between civil society and NEPAD officialdom is healthy and should be promoted. It is, however, encouraging that the past four years have seen the opening up of space for civil society to engage not only with NEPAD issues but also with issues of governance in general. The continent has literally witnessed an avalanche of conferences involving civil society actors, NEPAD officials and African leaders, although this has not been evenly spread across all regions.

This paper concludes on a cautiously optimistic note. To some extent, the sense of optimism created with the advent of NEPAD in Africa can be compared to that generated by the euphoria of the early independence years. Just when the continent was increasingly viewed as a hopeless case, a group of African leaders have salvaged the international image of Africa by introducing a programme that has managed to grab the attention of even the fiercest of cynics in the world. Since 2001, no world leader of global influence could conclude a speech with relevance to Africa without reference to NEPAD. The G8 has been goaded into introducing the Africa Action Plan, partnership forums with regional clubs of the wealthy such as the EU have been established, and discussions within South-South cooperation forums on NEPAD have taken place. Notwithstanding contributions made thus far, the fact is that most of the statements of political support are yet to translate into material commitments.

Countless workshops and conferences have been held on the African continent to discuss this or other aspect relating to NEPAD. The debate as to the 'African-ness' or 'unAfrican-ness' of NEPAD has also been raging and covers questions regarding the ideological orientation of the programme as well as predictions of its success or failure.

While the NEPAD Secretariat has made good progress in producing plans and policies, this has not been accompanied by similar progress in the implementation of projects. To some extent, this is as a result of the lack of sufficient capacity on the part of the implementing agents of the programme, the RECS, and AU member states themselves. A shared understanding on the responsibilities of the NEPAD Secretariat and AU member states does not seem to have developed.

Consequently, undue demands and expectations to implement NEPAD projects are often placed on the Secretariat. Moreover, a sense of collective ownership of the programme does not seem to exist across the continent. There are those who see NEPAD more as a preserve of the five initiating states. It is against this background that the question often arises: What will happen to NEPAD after Thabo Mbeki, or indeed even after Obasanjo's 'third term'?

Endnotes

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- 2 Ibid.
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- 11 That Wade acceded to Omega being subsumed in the NAI with some ongoing reluctance is no secret. At a multi-level stakeholder meeting held in Sandton, South Africa during the latter part of 2004, Wade shocked his counterparts (presidents Mbeki and Obasanjo) when he said he had not seen a single NEPAD project, and as recently as 20 June 2005 he would state that "[s]ince Nepad was founded (in 2001), its officials have spent \$15m; they have not moved anything forward an inch and they will not move anything forward". <www.web.inter.nl.net/users/Paul.Treanor/noeliberism.html> (8 November 2005).
- 12 E Martinez & A García, <www.web.inter.nl.net/users/Paul.Treanor/noeliberism.html> (8 November 2005).
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- 14 NEPAD framework document, p 23.
 - 15 Ibid.
 - 16 Ibid, p 20.
 - 17 Taylor, 2006, op cit, p 10.
 - 18 Ibid.
 - 19 Cunningham Nqucukana is Head of Peace, Security and Governance at the NEPAD Secretariat. He made this observation at a Southern African civil society consultative meeting, which was part of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflicts held in Pretoria, South Africa, 14–16 February 2005.
 - 20 Members of the HSGIC are the following: Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, Botswana, Mauritius, Mozambique, Gabon, Congo, Angola, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and Mali.
 - 21 NEPAD progress report, July 2002, p 9.
 - 22 Ibid.
 - 23 Compare, for example, the manner in which South Africa was mandated via an express AU Summit decision to host one of the AU organs, the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) – an extensive continental process culminating in a highly competitive selection.
 - 24 NEPAD progress report, op cit.
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 - 31 W Nkuhlu, Report presented to the Meeting of Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee, 19 April 2005, Sharm Sheik, Egypt.
 - 32 See Mucavele, op cit, for details.
 - 33 See <www.afdb.org> for NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility related projects.
 - 34 Ibid.
 - 35 A study initiated by NEPAD in this regard in 14 African countries indicated that the countries have about US\$127 billion in public pension funds.
 - 36 *NEPAD Dialogue*, No. 102, 2 August 2005.
 - 37 It is necessary to note that the concept of peer review is not the intellectual property of the NEPAD architects. The fact is that "[t]here is no other international organisation in which the practice of peer review has been so extensively developed as the OECD ...". Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Peer Review: An OECD tool for cooperation and change*, OECD, France, 2003, p 12.
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 - 42 The NAPRM-GC was launched by the President of Ghana, John Kufo, on 18 March 2004.
 - 43 In Ghana the organisations were the following: Centre for Democratic Development (CDD) – for democracy and good governance; Centre for Policy Analysis (CEPA) – for economic governance; Private Enterprise Foundation – for corporate governance; and the Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) of the University of Ghana – for socio-economic development. Ministry of Regional Cooperation and NEPAD Cooperation of the government of the Republic of Ghana, <www.ghana.gov.gh/governing/ministries/economy/planning.php>.
 - 44 Government of Rwanda, <www.nepad.gov.rw/pages.php>.
 - 45 J Cilliers, *NEPAD's Peer Review Mechanism*, ISS Paper 64, November 2002, p 4.
 - 46 The question of what constitutes civil society is an old one, but there is generally an agreement that civil society is everything outside government. Within the AU, the statutes of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) seem to give this view an official status. In this regard, civil society is viewed as: social groups such as those representing women, children, the youth, the elderly and people with disabilities and special needs; professional groups such as associations of artists, engineers, health practitioners, social workers, the media, teachers, sport associations, legal professionals, social scientists, academia, business organisations, national chambers of commerce, workers, employers, industry and agriculture, as well as other private sector interest groups; NGOs, community-based organisations and voluntary organisations; and cultural organisations. Article 3 of the ECOSOCC Statutes. Also see H Wameyo, The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): The role of civil society, in *The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): Challenges and developments*, op cit, p 84.
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About this paper

This paper provides an overview of development programmes that have been experimented with on the African continent, and aims to identify the differences between such programmes and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The paper argues that NEPAD distinguishes itself from previous plans on the basis of its clearly elaborated leadership and implementation monitoring structures, as well as the emphasis it places on the need for African leaders to address issues of governance. This paper is also a useful tool for engaging in the debate on the implementation of NEPAD.

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