NEPAD and the future of the sustainable development in Africa: challenges and opportunities

Prof. Dr. Troubia Nadir, *University of Ahmed Draïa-Adrar,* ***Email:*** *nad.troubia@univ-adrar.edu.dz*

Dr. Bakadi Massaoud , *University of Ahmed Draïa -Adrar,* ***Email:*** *bak.messaoud@univ-adrar.edu.dz*

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Abstract:

Reaching a high level of development is the main goal to achieve by every country. Since the rates of growth are very lower, African countries have created a partnership as a big step towards a real evolution of their economies. The partnership came under the name of NEPAD. The latter took place in 2001 in order to fight against poverty and to establish a sustainable growth in the continent. However, that program present several challenges such as creating new partnerships, eliminating trade barriers, political issues, human resource investment, development and diversification of industries, and the abolition of a foreign aid mentality

Key words*: NEPAD, sustainable development, challenges, African countries, Agenda 2063.*

Introduction:

Africa is the continent that is different from other parts of the world. Even though its land is full of various crucial resources, African area is one the poorest zones in the world. African countries survive depending on the support and help of many international organizations. They suffer from unlimited deficiencies at multiple levels such as education, healthcare, public and private economic sectors, financial system and so on. Security position is very critical in many palaces due to the violence and frequent conflicts between groups. This presents threats and challenges which are negatively impacting the local economies.

In most African nations, people are still facing severe threats of famine and deaths because of lack of food, higher prices, absence or low incomes, and big rates of unemployment. Furthermore, the continent remains weak and unable to solve its own problems despite its strengths mainly the youth's power. Indeed, projected population growth estimates show Africa as the fastest-growing region of the world, with a growing youth population that will reach about 60 percent of the total population by 2050. These young people require education, jobs, housing and health care, thereby putting pressure on Governments to deliver.

Many plans took place in order to create a real socio-economic development into the continent. For instance, the governments are trying to take advantage of this demographic dividend by investing in quality education, teacher training, technology and innovation, which would motivate productivity, create jobs and promote inclusive growth and prosperity. Scaling up investments and strengthening the ability of institutions to deliver innovative solutions will involve multilateral partnerships, which the United Nations can facilitate. Providing opportunities and empowering women and youth as a development goal will be essential.

One of the plans that African countries adopted is NEPAD, an acronym that stands for the New Partnership for Africa's Development. It was born in 2001 as a path to achieve some key goals especially eliminating poverty and build a solid development. However, the project includes several challenges and difficulties. Therefore, our current paper tends to answer the main problematic drawing as following:

What are the challenges and opportunities that NEPAD has on the future of the sustainable development in Africa?

The main question can be divided into a list of sub questions as below

- ✓ How can we define the program of NEPAD?
- ✓ Does NEPAD have objectives?
- ✓ What are the recent strategies and plans of NEPAD?
- ✓ What is meant by sustainable development?
- ✓ Are there any impacts of NEPAD plans on the future African sustainable development?

1. An overall definition of NEPAD:

There are different attempts to define NEPAD. Generally, it is a socio-economic flagship Program of the African Union (AU) that facilitates and coordinates the development of continent-wide programs and projects, mobilizes resources and engages the global community, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and member states in the implementation of these programs and projects[12]. It is possible to end up with one of the coming suggestions about the definition of NEPAD in the literature that is related to the development in Africa. Those suggestions are[13]:

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[12] *African Union Development Agency, NEPAD in Brief, AUDA-NEPAD, 2022, on the website: https://www.nepad.org/publication/nepad-brief, consulted on January 25th, 2025.*

[13] *African Development Bank, New Partnership for Africa (NEPAD), African Development Bank Group, 2025, on the website: https://www.afdb.org/en/topics-and-sectors/initiatives-partnerships/nepad, consulted on January 26th, 2025.*

- It is a holistic, comprehensive integrated strategic framework for the socio-economic development of Africa. The NEPAD provides a vision for Africa, a statement of the problems facing the continent and a program of action to resolve these problems in order to reach the vision.
- It is a plan that has been conceived and developed by African leaders.
- It is a comprehensive integrated development plan that addresses key social, economic and political priorities in a coherent and balanced manner.
- It is a commitment that African leaders are making to African people and to the international community, to place Africa on a path of sustainable growth.
- It is a commitment African leaders are making to accelerate the integration of the African continent into the global economy.
- It is a framework for a new partnership with the rest of the world.
- It is a call to the rest of the world to partner Africa in her own development on the basis of her own agenda and program of action.

In addition, the NEPAD agency has a strategy divided in six themes which can be presented through the figure below:

Figure 01: themes of NEPAD strategy



Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, NEPAD, United Nation, 2025, on the website: https://social.desa.un.org/issues/poverty-eradication/nepad

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is considered as the effective strategy to be followed in order to a socio-economic growth in the continent. The plan was actually adopted in 2002 by the African union as the way towards the coordination and collaboration of efforts provided by members during the present century. History of The New Partnership for Africa's Development involved several stages where the members had to unit forces to reach what the program is today.

The main initiatives towards the birth of NEPAD were 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 OAU 37th Summit and ratified by the AU in 2002 at its first summit[14].

1.1. Objectives of NEPAD:

This partnership is considered as the agency to improve living conditions in Africa and help all countries to move on to satisfied levels of development by focusing on the accomplishment some necessary needs such as[15]:

- ✓ Promoting high-impact projects that show proof-of-concept to transform the AU's continental strategic development frameworks into national development priorities.
- ✓ Improving knowledge sharing among states, supported by perfect team work and best activities for regional integration.
- ✓ Establishing partnerships and uniting efforts for the implementation of the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063.

The majority of African people, especially sub-Saharan areas, deeply struggle to get hopefully one meal per day; therefore, the major objective of NEPAP is the overcome any aspect of poverty or famine into continent. Moreover, NEPAD is seen as a mechanism to grave sustainable pillars of growth for all African nations whether at an individual case or collective one. Since Africa does not yet have a prominent role in the world, NEPAD is continuously working to make this true, which means in other words, the continent will be much more integrated in leading the world. The partnership also focuses on providing women chances to create and conduct businesses[16].

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[14] *The African Union Commission, New Partnership For Africa's Development (NEPAD), African Union, on the website: https://au.int/en/organs/nepad, consulted on January 25th, 2025.*

[15] *The African Union Commission, NEPAD / AU Development Agency, 2019, on the website: https://au.int/en/nepad, consulted on January 27th, 2025.*

[16] *The African Union Commission, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Op Cit.*

1.2. The importance of the foundation of NEPAD:

When African leaders decided to found the partnership, they had the intention to benefit from the multiple opportunities that would be emerged. The unique opportunity for African states is to ensure the interest in building the development plan and taking care of it. It was high necessary the ownership for the success of reform plans and visions. The governors understood the importance of accelerating African's economic development and starting to think of best ways to list and support development priorities, which would be needed to make African countries able to minimize the growth gap[17].

NEPAD was also a crucial opportunity to push countries members to align prosperities development goals among countries. Despite differences, there is a big chance to work for a lot common purposes since all countries share many characteristics. Working together is going to increase productivity and make any hard mission much easier. NEPAD is the main support for strengthening African position around the world and stopping the exploitation of its resources by other power. As a result, African countries may have the ability to negotiate its interests with the international community in the way to raise benefits and encourage advanced states to invest in social-economic sectors of the continent. The image of poverty, violence, conflict, diseases and corruption destroyed every attempt to develop Africa, but signing the New Partnership for Africa's Development contributes to improve that image and maintain pillar of growth across continent.

2. Brief description of sustainable development:

Sustainability is defined as a requirement of our generation to manage the resource bases such that average quality of life that is not ensured to be shared by all future. The expression 'quality of life' means that everything affects what is related to people life is included.

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[17] *Nobert Funk, Saleh M. Nsouli, The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): Opportunitires and challenges, IMF Working Paper, April 2003, P22.*

Sustainable development, also called Brundtland Report, was used first into the political agenda by the World Commission on Environment and Development via its report in 1987[18].

According to International Institute for Sustainable Development, sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"[19]. It means the development that is interested in ensuring best conditions of life for all generations. Using natural resources is controlled by the necessity that every citizen has a part in those resources, and we must protect that right.

The idea of sustainability is the basis for all current strategies ant frameworks of future world. All nations have united their visions to accomplish what is involved in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is supposed to bring prosperity and peace for people and the planet over time. The agenda implied 17 goals that require an urgent action by everybody within an effective partnership. Saving planet is the mission of every single person or government. Several problem threaten our future, hence, it is very important to act very fast especially are those are poor and developing.

[18] *Geir B. Asheim, Sustainable: Ethical Foundations and Economic Properties, Policy Research Working Paper 1302, the World Bank, May 1994, PP1-4.*

[19] *IISD, Sustainable Development, International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2025, on the website: https://www.iisd.org/mission-and-goals/sustainable-development, consulted on January 25th, 2025.*

Figure 02: Sustainable Developments Goals



Source: drishti, Sustainable Development, on the website: https://www.drishtiias.com/pdf/1594392281-sustainable-development-3.pdf, P5.

The term of sustainable development indicates our relativeness with the world and the way governments design policies to protect that world. This leads us to see some interpretations: First and foremost, economic growth can be done alone, all sectors are strongly connected. It is imperative to care of the economic, social and environmental sides at the same time. Then, the interconnected nature of sustainable development also insists to go beyond borders – whether they are geographical or institutional – in order to combine strategies and make rights decisions[20].

3. Plans and strategies of development adopted by NEPAD:

Member states of NEPAD designed a new strategy in order to realize what is included in the agenda 2063. It is a part of all strategies

[20] *Tracey Strange and Anne Bayley, Sustainable Development, OECD, 2008, P26.*

that are adopted, developed and performed through a clear vision to reach an economic integration and development of all African population. The vision is based on reinforcing five corners[21]:

1) Plan, collaborate and implement priority programs for economic integration.

2) Maintain the ability of all African countries and regional entities.

3) Bring sophisticated knowledge to African region and regional bodies.

4) Find sufficient funds for finance projects and implementation.

5) Collaborate with all concerned parties in terms of development or partnership.

Agenda 2063 was shaped within a thorough process in which all partners and relevant participants have been involved in addition to various social groups such as women, youth, Civil Society Organizations, Research Institutions, Government planners, Private Sector, the African media, and so on. The process was consultative whose results make an initial stage for the he Aspirations of the African People and; consequently, the appearance of Agenda 2063.

The way to the final form of the Agenda knew an additional review of African development experiences, discussion of potential problems and benefits. Besides, an extra review was necessary for all plans followed inside and outside countries, the studies carried out and available frameworks and materials. It was also important to ensure that Africa would count on its financial capacities to take in charge the development needed for the Agenda 2063 during the first 10 years in particular[22].

It is widely necessary to mention the way NEPAD selects programmes and the way it finances them, in this respect. There are

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[21] *African Union Development Agency, AUDA- NEPAD Strategic Plan 2020-2023, African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), Johannesburg, 2020, P4.*

[22] *African Union Commission, Agenda 2063, African Union Commission, Addis Ababa, September 2015, P11.*

more than 51 programmes and projects have been started in four important sectors which are energy, transport, trans-boundary water and ICT. African leaders wanted, behind those programmes coined in January 2012, to get a strong continent able to overcome the threats that may hurt its future. All bilateral partners are mobilized to share costs since the interests are common[23].

The strategy of the Agenda can be summarized in the following picture.

Figure 03: the schematic presentation of the foundation of Agenda 2063,



***Source**: African Union Commission, Agenda 20263, African Union Commission, Addis Ababa, September 2015, P14.*

[23] *African Union Development Agency, NEPAD in Brief, AUDA-NEPAD, 2022, PP 8-9.*

First loot at the scheme tells that the strategic structure of Agenda 2063 is divided into seven aspirations and each aspiration includes a set of goals to fulfill through giving solutions to some issues. For instance, the first aspiration "A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development" deals with several purposes including reducing inequality of income and chances, fighting against poverty, improving the quality of life of the whole people and make them get access to basic necessities of human beings, Guaranteeing a safe life and providing a satisfied situation of education and healthcare, supporting economic branches of Africa by putting in place solid manufactories, and so on.

In the second aspiration "An integrated continent, politically united, based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance" the concept is about how to reach a union and integration in favor of sustainable growth, good trade, interrelation of exports and imports, movement of individuals and capital between countries. These aims require the existence of four conditions including[24]:

- Founding a powerful united Africa;
- Creating a large and effective connection among member states through the building a best web of rail, road, sea and air;
- Establishing the (Continental Free Trade CFTA) among African nations;
- Advancing regional and continental power pools, as well as ICT.

While analyzing what can be done at the end of the Agenda as result, the experts expect there will be two different sections of outputs: expected outcomes and influences which are shown in the table below:

[24] *African Union Commission, Agenda 20263, African Union Commission, Op Cit, P13.*

Table 01: Summary of Expected Outcomes and Impacts

Expected Outcomes	Expected Impacts
1. Growth in intra-African trade and investment 2. Improved competitiveness of Africa's economies 3. Food security and nutrition 4. Enhanced access to energy 5. Sustainable production and consumption 6. Technological advancement 7. Reduction of inequality 8. Organisational excellence and accountability	1. Inclusive and shared growth 2. Improved wellbeing of Africans 3. Peace and security due to improved quality of life 4. Sustainable development 5. Africa's enhanced global status

Source: African Union Development Agency, AUDA- NEPAD Strategic Plan 2020-2023, African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), Johannesburg, 2020, P6.

According to the table, the future outcomes include elements that contribute to strengthen a lot of social, political and economic aspects in the continent. Having a powerful relationship between member states in terms of commerce and investment comes at the top of targeted consequences. This is going to play a significant role in increasing growth numbers and the continental competition over the rest of the world. Food security and nutrition is a huge challenge for which everyone is struggling, so member states relay on the new program of NEPAD to make this dream true. This is going to be executed hand in hand with creation of sustainable production and consumption.

African people will not be able to resist if they remain using weak and old technology. Today, it is the time of artificial technology and robots. Hence, improving technological levels in all fields is going to reduce the gaps between Africa and the industrial continents. The impacts will be various as long as the new program is implemented as planned. General and interactive development will be distinguished as

well as a better life for African population. All conflicts will find its end when the pillars of a real sustainable development are installed.

3.1. The future of continental sustainable development resulted from NEPAP new strategies:

All strategies and projects that have been taken played an important role in changing the situation of Africa over time. The GDP of the continent jumped from 2.1% to 3.6% in one year, which is from 2016 to 2017. It got more than 4% in 2020. About 1.2 billion persons live in Africa now. The working-age population is expected to augment from 705 million in 2018 to at least 1 billion in 2030. Millions young people enter the labor market per year. A solid economy requires hiring 12 million individuals in a year. The way also towards economic integration indicated that trade policy reforms could have the value of 137 billion dollars per year which equals 4.5% of Africa's GDP[25].

According to the same reference, the countries' competition gets stronger than before owning to the good effects of new plans of NEPAD as well as Agenda 2063. Many countries have succeeded to improve their competitiveness performance in 2019 even those places that are considered the poorest regions like sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, South Africa has gained 60th position, while Namibia (94th), Rwanda (100th), Uganda (115th) and Guinea (122nd) because of their improvement. There are other good examples in this context citing both Kenya (95th) and Nigeria (116th) which show a significant performance of their own economies[26].

3.2. Sustainable development reflected in multiple outcomes

Several studies have been undertaken in order to analyze the impact of NEPAD projects on the continent. It is hard to mention all the results that may deduce because of two main reasons as far as I'm

[25] *Look at African Union Development Agency, Op Cit, P8.*
[26] *Look at African Union Development Agency, Op Cit, P8.*

concerned. One, a lot plans or projects are still taking place and it is too early to talk about its findings. Second, the results vary from one states to another regarding the differences that might be involved.

In general, these studies have dealt with key sectors such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, agriculture, and industry; additionally to NEPAD's role in increasing regional integration via shared development and alignment of polices among members. Enhancing the continent's growth and making all states prosper is a dream for which the whole common work and efforts have been provided till now, and the future is getting better through some facts that NEPAD's new strategies is reporting on its official sites. It is appropriate to summarize some negative outcomes in the points below[27]:

Improvement of Regional Integration:

The main aim behind the appearance of NEPAD is to delete poverty from the continent and plant the seeds of sustainable development. This is not going to happen until the integration regional takes place. Everything in Africa confirms that a regional integration is quite necessary and can bring positive effects. NEPAD has focused on infrastructure as a basis of regional integration. Projects have been executed to enlarge transportations roads, to create free trade zone, and to facilitate the movement of habitants. They have thereby contributed to the expansion of regional markets and stability of African economies. NEPAD has tried to find solutions for the conflicts that have been widely harmed efforts of collaboration. Regional integration has been promoted through an efficient and fair share of knowledge. The African institutions and companies have benefit from the last technology of ICT.

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[27] *Utangisila Bena Osee and others, Shaping the Future of Africa: The Efficiency of NEPAD in Promoting to Develop Africa, International Journal of Social Work 11(1):15, February 2024, PP19-21.*

It is really important to notice that NEPAD plan strategy has played an important role in encouraging the flow of foreign investments to the continent which were participate to reinforce the infrastructural projects and support regional initiatives of development. Furthermore, the partnership between private and public sectors was also fueling the pillars of regional integration and; as a result, making sustainable development.

Empowerment of Women and Youth:

Sustainable development cannot be constructed without the contribution of every single element of society. Hence, NEPAD believed that the role of women and youth would certainly make a big change. The program of NEPAD was responsible for the empowerment of women and youth within Africa's progress. The new partnership has deeply worked for the objective of realizing the gender equality and participation of youth. This had a big influence on the sustainable development.

NEPAD organization facilitates what help women to engage in the world of business and financial activities. Training programs have been designed to response to the needs of women and young people in economic fields. A lot of women were and are beneficiaries of education, training, business skills, and necessary information in order to create their own projects. In order to guarantee women's political rights, there were many enthusiastic attempts to involve women in making decision about the future of the continent and thinking about avoiding all forms of marginalization and racism.

Young individuals were in the core of interest for NEAPAD agendas and strategies. Most programs are in charge of eradicating unemployment through providing best job opportunities and aiding youth to have their own businesses. Since sustainable development basically consists of human development, a set of programs have

concentrated on making this part of society get access to education and innovation areas.

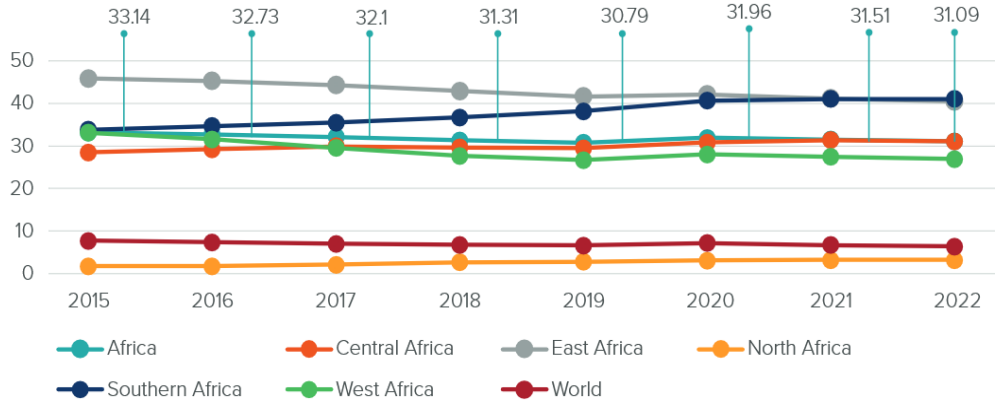
Infrastructure Development Initiatives:

As we have seen under the first point of regional integration, infrastructural sector is very important for an effective sustainable development. Infrastructure progress is conducted by the program called PIDA. The latter has focused on doing 51 key projects at the cost of more than 68 billion dollars. PIDA is partially sectioned between the African Union, the African Development Bank, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

Elimination of poverty in the continent:

Even though the program of NEPAD has driven several strategies to reduce poverty, the population living under the international poverty line is somehow big. It was 2.15 dollars per day. However, levels of poverty dropped from 33.14 percent to 31.08 percent between the years 2015-2022. Look at figure below.

Figure 04: Employed population falling below the international poverty line, 2015–2022



***Source**: The African Union, African Development Bank, United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2024 Africa Sustainable Development Report, P35.*

The evolution of the phenomenon shows positive results despite the affectation of covid- 19 in the middle of the period, which means that the effectiveness of NEPAD plans. On the other hand, The NEPOD new strategies were enough to avoid the increase of population living under the national line of poverty. It jumped from 33 percent in 2013 to 38 percent in 2023. Reduction of poverty was uneven from one region to another.

Estimations show positive evolution in the situation of sustainable development resulted from the application of agendas. According to the recent report published by African Union and other organization, a considerable reduction in poverty happened since 2000, but a set of crises brock this process. More than 55 million people dropped into poverty in 2020 which presents 54.8 percent of individuals suffering from poverty around the world.

Many results indicate the success of some strategies adopted by NEPAD to create and accelerate the development in Africa. However, it is really early to talk of developed continent or the land where everything will be okay in the light of multiple challenges that may harm the path towards a strong and permanent growth. Most African countries are still weak and not able to relay on its capacities. They are dependent on the foreign aids.

The creation of free trade zone is also a big challenge to overcome by African countries. Economic exchange between them stays at very low rates. Even though some brave initiative of free zone, commercial and economic relationship between African state needs to be powerful and active.

Conclusion:

To sum up, NEPAD is an enthusiastic partnership that was signed by African countries in order to reach some sense of prosperity for all African components. The program tackled very important issues such as eradicating poverty and supporting sustainable development's

pillars in the continent. NEPAD strategies align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that appeal the contribution of all earth's states to work hand-in-hand if they want to end poverty, improve health and education, mitigate inequality and get better sustainable development.

Recommendations

1. Regional integration among African must be stronger than it is now. The big responsibility of NEPAD is to promote and coordinate efforts between member states in order to achieve that goal.
2. NEPAD should take into consideration the big importance of infrastructure in reinforcing regional integration and spread out sustainable development. The situation of infrastructure still needs to be more enhanced.
3. NEPAD should concentrate more on promoting n initiatives, renewable energy projects, and sustainable agricultural practices to protect crucial nature resources.
4. More violence and more conflicts are going to damage any hope of development in the continent.
5. State members should carry out a detailed analysis for the challenges in order to make their partnership much strengthful.

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