

Sources of Information on New Economic Partnership For African Development (NEPAD)

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Introduction

The African continent has been facing an uphill task in terms of its development. It cannot favorably compete with other industrialized nations of the world. It is one of the cardinal reasons why the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) was formed, to tackle the problems of development. Although Africa is rich in natural resources, it remains today the poorest continent, with not less than half of its people living below the poverty line on less than \$1 per day. Africa is also the most aid-dependent, the most indebted, as well the most marginalized region. African leaders have launched the NEPAD initiative in order to recapture the glory of the past, regain the identity and self-confidence of its people, and put the continent back on the path of political and sustainable development (Ogola 2002).

Before NEPAD, Africans tried many panaceas to develop the continent, but unlike America and Europe in an earlier time, they do not have the luxury of independence, which is central to self-regeneration. Among the well known initiatives are (Aluko, 2002):

- The Priority Programme of Economic Redressing of Africa (PPERA), adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1985 and Complementary United Nations Programme for the Economic Redressing and Development of Africa (PANUREDA).
- The 1991 Treaty establishing the Africa Economic Community (AEC).

- The New International Economic Order (NIEO), which implies a call for the restructuring of the present world economic system with a view to eliminating its debilitating tenets that are inimical to the economic interest of the World Countries (and Africa in particular).

African leaders, while adopting the New African Initiative (NAI) in Lasaka, Zambia, in July 2001, advertised it as a concerted approach to actualize the African Union. The NAI was later renamed New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) on October 23, 2001, in Abuja at the meeting of Heads of State Implementation committee. NEPAD is "premised on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalizing world" (Onyekpere 2002). Through NEPAD, a new debate is emerging, moving away from blaming all the problems the continent is facing on colonialism, to realize our collective responsibility in rebuilding the Continent and its people. Therefore, NEPAD is seen as a wake-up call to men and women to develop themselves as well as the continent.

One of the criticisms of NEPAD has been that the general African populace does not know about it (Nwankwo, 2003). Emad (2002) states that, "NEPAD as a concept has failed to ignite the much-needed appeal and what so many people have consistently wondered what the pro-development initiative entails." It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to look at the sources of disseminating information on NEPAD.

Philosophy of NEPAD

This new partnership is a pledge by African leaders, "based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development and to participate actively in the world economy and body politic." (NEPAD, 2005) *The New Partnership for Africa's Development* is a "call for a new relationship of partnership between Africa and the international community, especially the highly industrialized countries, to overcome the development chasm that has widened over centuries of unequal relations." (NEPAD 2005)

Objectives of NEPAD

To appreciate the role proper information dissemination can play in the realization of NEPAD, which is the brainchild of Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa , Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Bouteflika of

Algeria, it is pertinent to know its objectives. Some of the objectives of NEPAD are:

- The peoples and government in Africa should understand that development is a process of empowerment and self-reliance.
- The eradication of widespread and severe poverty and HIV/AIDS in the continent, and progress toward sustainable development (Oniorhenuan, 2002).
- The progress towards gender equality and empowering women by eliminating gender disparities in the enrollment in primary and secondary schools by 2005.
- Reduction of infant and child mortality rates by two-thirds by 2015 and to provide access to all who need reproductive health services.
- Entrenchment of good governance and promotion and protection of democracy and human rights in Africa .
- Focus on provision of essential public goods such as transport, energy, water, disease eradication and environmental protection.
- Lasting peace and security in the continent.
- Fair and just conditions in which Africans can participate effectively in the world economy and politics.

Sources of Disseminating Information on NEPAD

Information is one element of human existence that has continued to assume a prominent position in the last decades, and is now regarded as one of the foremost factors in production, competing with land, capital, and labour in terms of importance (Nwokocha and Uhegbu, 2001). In fact, according to Camble (1994), development programmes in Africa are often formulated and executed with insufficient information dissemination to the primary beneficiaries and as a result many of these development programmes fail.

The benefit of information lies in keeping citizens abreast of developments. Information dissemination is a vital ingredient in planning and executing any development programme.

Some of the sources of information dissemination for effective implementation of NEPAD are discussed below.

Individuals

Individuals are well known as custodians of information and constitute primary sources. Before the use of paper and later technologies, individuals or oral traditions were the only sources of information dissemination. Individual sources of information dissemination can be anyone who is well versed in the objectives of NEPAD. This source of information can be disseminated anywhere: in the office, in the vehicle, at home, at drinking parlours, schools, churches, clubs, and associations. In rural areas, individuals such as teachers, civil servants (retired and serving) are noted for disseminating information about government programmes and policies to the public, formally or informally.

Corporate Bodies

Corporate bodies represent another source of information on NEPAD. Corporate bodies include companies, industries, banks, and other financial institutions, universities, churches, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Corporate bodies, especially those directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of NEPAD, generate a lot of information. In universities, it may be in form of lectures, seminars, symposia, and conferences, where the participants are told what NEPAD stands for and the role of the citizens in making NEPAD effective. Corporate bodies as sources of information have the advantage of disseminating mostly authentic and factual information.

Published Books and Materials

Some of the best-known sources of information dissemination are books and other published materials. The other published materials include journals, newsletters, newspapers, and magazines. Many Africans rely heavily on newspapers and magazines for information. Published books and materials are used to sensitize the citizens to the aims and objectives of NEPAD.

Government Agencies and Mass Media

It is the primary aim of government to care for the welfare of citizens. The success or failure of any government programme, no matter the sector, depends on the way the government disseminates

information on the programme. For NEPAD to succeed and for full participation of citizens in the programme, there is a need for effective mobilization of the citizens through information dissemination using appropriate agencies and media. The establishment of a National Orientation Agency (NOA) in Nigeria, for example, is appropriate for the dissemination of information on NEPAD, whose objectives include eradication of poverty and HIV/AIDS on the continent.

Government agencies responsible for the implementation and success of the programme should respond appropriately by using the electronic media (radio and television) to disseminate information on NEPAD. Citizens feel a sense of belonging when they are kept informed of government programmes and policies.

Libraries

The library is one of the most reliable sources of information dissemination because it tries to acquire as many materials as possible on every point of view. The Illinois State Library (1994) reports that libraries may offer special training programmes to create awareness on government development programmes.

Okafor (2004) notes that librarians must be conversant with the terminology used in economic development and should also be aware of various government programmes. The library can write columns for newspapers on government programmes.

Walzer and Gruidl (1997) agree that libraries can also participate in radio and television shows on its stand on government programmes. Librarians can collect information about communities and citizens and make it available.

Libraries can maintain a current database on NEPAD, which is readily available to both government and beneficiaries. The database centre should be responsible for the collection, classification, storage, publication, and dissemination of data on NEPAD available in any African country. This can be made possible through individual country's national library or office of statistics.

Libraries can also disseminate information on NEPAD through lectures, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), notice boards, posters, displays, cuttings, seminars (published in print media).

Conclusion

Proper information dissemination is an indispensable factor in the realization of the objectives of any government programme. Apart from the other sources of information dissemination on NEPAD, the library has a civilizing role in this aspect by collecting, preserving, and disseminating information, as it continues to play an important role in the sustainability of NEPAD programme aimed at national and continental development.

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