

# NEPAD AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA: PROGRESS, CHALLENGES, AND PROSPECTS

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## KEYWORDS

NEPAD, Sustainable  
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## ABSTRACT

*The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are essential frameworks for advancing sustainable development in African nations, including Nigeria. NEPAD, initiated in 2001, seeks to tackle the continent's developmental difficulties by stimulating economic growth, alleviating poverty, enhancing infrastructure, and advocating for good governance. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations in 2015, outline a worldwide framework for attaining a more equal, inclusive, and sustainable future by 2030. This article examines Nigeria's advancements, obstacles, and potential in executing NEPAD's programs and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It evaluates Nigeria's progress in poverty alleviation, healthcare, education, infrastructure enhancement, and gender equality, while emphasizing significant obstacles such as political instability, insufficient budget, ineffective governance, and security issues. The document examines options for utilizing regional integration, technological advancement, and private sector participation to address these obstacles and expedite progress. This study seeks to elucidate Nigeria's trajectory towards sustainable development and the attainment of NEPAD and SDG targets via the analysis of these frameworks.*

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## INTRODUCTION

NEPAD, or the New Partnership for Africa's Growth, was established as a continental initiative to boost the continent's socioeconomic development. In order to promote economic integration, reduce poverty, and foster sustainable growth through regional cooperation, NEPAD was founded in 2001. It is crucial to Nigeria's development goal, especially in view of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN, which provide a framework for addressing global concerns like poverty, inequality, environmental sustainability, and peace (Oweibia, et al 2024).

The SDGs have been successfully incorporated into national development goals in Nigeria. NEPAD's integration with Nigeria's national goals, such as Vision 2020 and the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), has led to advancements in infrastructure, governance, health, and education. The country still has a long way to go before fully accomplishing the SDGs, notwithstanding these

efforts. These challenges include those that obstruct egalitarian advancement and sustainable development, like political unpredictability, environmental deterioration, inadequate infrastructure, and corruption.

NEPAD represents Africa's commitment to self-reliant development as a continental strategy that integrates the goals of economic growth, poverty eradication, and sustainable development (Royo, et al & Parikh, 2022). By placing a strong emphasis on regional cooperation, efficient governance, and strategic partnerships with the public and commercial sectors, NEPAD aims to advance the development of the African continent. NEPAD's institutional framework ensures that African countries remain dedicated to pursue their shared objective of long-term development and global economic integration, even in the face of persistent challenges.

The SDGs can effectively address Nigeria's development challenges, but achieving them will require addressing systemic

issues such as governance, infrastructure, and security (Abdulyakeen & Nurain, 2024). Although Nigeria has achieved significant progress, there are still numerous challenges to overcome. By strengthening its institutions, improving resource management, and leveraging its young population and regional alliances, Nigeria could make great strides toward achieving the SDGs and ensuring a sustainable future for its citizens. Under the context of NEPAD, this study examines Nigeria's progress toward the SDGs by looking at the noticeable improvements in key sectors. It also highlights the challenges that remain in the way of accomplishing these goals and the chances to overcome them. In doing so, it assesses how NEPAD supports collaboration between the Nigerian government, regional organizations, and international entities in order to achieve the country's development objectives and further Africa's overarching objective of sustainable growth. The specific objectives are:

To determine and examine the main obstacles preventing Nigeria from successfully implementing the SDGs and NEPAD.

To assess how external elements like foreign investments, international assistance, and world economic conditions affect Nigeria's attainment of the SDGs and NEPAD.

To investigate the possibilities and chances for improving NEPAD and SDG implementation in Nigeria.

To offer policy suggestions aimed at strengthening Nigeria's strategy for accomplishing the SDGs and NEPAD, with an emphasis on resilience, sustainability, and inclusivity.

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## NEPAD: ORIGINS, OBJECTIVES, AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

In response to Africa's persistent problems with poverty, underdevelopment, and socioeconomic development, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was formally established in 2001 (Aguene, 2021). A comprehensive, self-driven development strategy that would address Africa's fundamental problems and promote sustainable growth was what gave rise to the project. African leaders, including Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, and then-South African President Thabo Mbeki, worked together to create NEPAD after realizing that Africa needed to take charge of its own development path.

The program was created to support the African Union (AU) and was a follow-up to the Organization of African Unity's (OAU) Lagos Plan of Action (1980) and the African Economic Community (AEC) (Alaye & Fakoya, 2024). The establishment of NEPAD was also in line with the AU's overarching objectives, which included encouraging greater collaboration and solidarity among African nations. The collaboration signalled a change to a more inclusive and market-driven approach to development, highlighting the significance of infrastructure, human capital development, and sound governance for Africa's economic success.

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## OBJECTIVES OF NEPAD

NEPAD's main goals stem from the aim to reduce poverty, promote sustainable economic growth, and integrate Africa into the global economy. According to (Amfofo & Laari, et al, 2023; Arif, et al 2019). The NEPAD framework, which addresses the continent's short-term and long-term problems, lays out these objectives. Important goals consist of:

**Encouraging Sustainable Economic Growth and Development:** With an emphasis on important industries including agriculture, energy, education, and technology, NEPAD seeks to guarantee that African nations implement growth plans that may yield long-term advantages.

**Ending Poverty and Raising Living Standards:** One of NEPAD's main goals is to lower poverty rates throughout the continent by expanding access to basic services like clean water, sanitation, healthcare, and education. It also aims to promote economic growth and job creation.

**Promoting Regional Integration:** Through programs including regional trade agreements, infrastructure development, and intra-African trade facilitation, NEPAD promotes greater economic and political integration among African nations.

**Fostering Peace and Good Governance:** By tackling conflicts that impede development and highlighting the significance of open governance systems, NEPAD aims to fortify democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in African nations.

**Improving Global Competitiveness:** NEPAD seeks to increase Africa's competitiveness in the global market by enhancing its infrastructure, human capital, and technological capabilities, hence enhancing its involvement in global investment and trade flows.

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## INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF NEPAD

According to Anyanwu and Daru (2021), NEPAD's institutional framework is made to guarantee efficient project and program governance, coordination, and execution. Several important institutions make up the structure:

**The Agency for NEPAD Planning and Coordination (NPCA):** The technical organization in charge of carrying out the NEPAD program is the NPCA. It coordinates the efforts of the different entities participating in the development agenda and offers strategic direction. To supervise the execution of NEPAD's programs, the NPCA collaborates with regional economic communities (RECs), African governments, and foreign partners.

**The AU, or African Union:** In the political and governance facets of NEPAD, the AU is essential. Since NEPAD is an AU project, its development is monitored by the continent's decision-making organizations, including the AU Assembly and the AU Executive Council, which also make sure that the program's aims complement the larger political and economic goals of the African Union.

**Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC) of NEPAD:** This body is NEPAD's decision-making body and is made up of African heads of state and government. It offers strategic

leadership, direction, and supervision to guarantee that NEPAD's goals are in line with Africa's more general development objectives.

RECs, or regional economic communities: NEPAD's programs are implemented at the regional level with the help of the RECs, which include organizations like COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa), SADC (Southern African Development Community), and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). They guarantee that NEPAD's programs are customized to meet the unique requirements and difficulties of various African regions.

To help with the funding and execution of NEPAD initiatives, private sector stakeholders are brought together via the NEPAD Business Group (NBG). The NBG seeks to establish public-private collaborations, support business development, and stimulate investment.

The AfDB, or African Development Bank: NEPAD's projects are heavily financed by the AfDB, especially in the fields of energy, agriculture, and infrastructure. In addition to offering financial assistance and technical know-how, the bank makes ensuring that initiatives are in line with Africa's development priorities.

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## SDGS AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO NIGERIA

Established by the United Nations in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a comprehensive framework designed to address the most important issues facing the world today, such as poverty, inequality, climate change, peace, and justice (Amfofo & Laari, Ware & Shaw, 2023). According to Arif, et al (2019), these 17 goals and 169 targets are intended to help nations work toward a sustainable and inclusive future by 2030. The SDGs provide Nigeria, a nation with enormous economic potential but also a number of development obstacles, a vision and a set of realistic goals to raise the standard of living for its people. Nigeria has a significant stake in achieving the SDGs because it is the most populated country in Africa and has one of the biggest economies. Poverty, extreme inequality, poor infrastructure, environmental deterioration, and security issues are only a few of the nation's many problems. In light of these conditions, the SDGs are an essential national instrument for attaining sustainable growth and development in addition to being a global agenda.

**Goal 1: No Poverty** One of the most urgent issues facing Nigeria is poverty. More over 40% of Nigerians, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), are below the poverty level (Asaju, 2023). In Nigeria, reducing poverty has long been a top governmental priority, and there has been a growing movement to link national initiatives with SDG 1. The National Social Investment Program (NSIP) and other government initiatives to increase access to social safety nets are described in the literature. However, obstacles like inadequate funding, political corruption, and poor implementation restrict the advancements made in this field.

**Goal 2: Zero Hunger:** Millions of Nigerians suffer from hunger and malnutrition, despite the country's status as a major agricultural powerhouse (Abdulyakeen, 2022). Research highlights the significance of raising access to wholesome food, decreasing post-harvest losses, and increasing agricultural productivity. Initiatives

like the Agricultural Transformation Agenda and the Green Revolution are positive moves. However, obstacles to attaining food security include poor infrastructure, the effects of climate change, and security concerns (particularly in the north).

**Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being:** Inadequate financing, a lack of healthcare personnel, and poor infrastructure are some of the issues facing Nigeria's health industry. Significant worries include the burden of non-communicable diseases, the presence of infectious diseases like malaria, and high rates of mother and infant mortality. According to studies like (Mabuuze & Mabuze, 2020; Lami & Meca, 2020), despite initiatives like the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) initiative and the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) to improve healthcare delivery, systemic problems like underinvestment in the health sector and poor governance make it difficult to achieve SDG 3.

**Goal 4: Quality Education:** Given Nigeria's issues with high dropout rates, subpar education, and limited school facilities, education is another crucial area for achieving the SDGs (Okonkwo & Obidebube, 2022). The literature emphasizes the necessity of educational reforms to provide access to high-quality education, especially for underprivileged populations such as girls, children with disabilities, and rural populations. Although national programs like the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program seek to address these problems, significant advancements in the efficacy and quality of education delivery are still needed to reach SDG 4 targets.

**Goal 5: Gender Equality:** In Nigeria, gender inequality is still a major problem since women and girls are discriminated against in the workplace, in schools, and in healthcare. To address these concerns, a number of measures have been implemented, including the National Gender Policy and programs to prevent gender-based violence. However, advancement is hampered by ingrained patriarchy, cultural values, and lax enforcement of the law. To guarantee that women's rights are completely realized in Nigeria, literature highlights the significance of a multipronged strategy that includes campaigning, legal reform, and awareness initiatives.

**Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation:** In Nigeria, access to sanitary facilities and clean water is a significant problem, especially in rural and informal settlement areas. According to the literature, the nation continues to face challenges related to poor water resource management, pollution, and insufficient infrastructure, despite modest progress in the delivery of clean water. Although initiatives like the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (RWSSP) have had some success, more coordinated efforts are needed to achieve SDG 6, especially when it comes to enhancing water resource governance.

**Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth:** Nigeria has had substantial economic growth, but it has not been equitable, and the nation has high unemployment rates, especially among young people. The economy is still largely reliant on oil, despite the proposals for industrialization and economic diversification initiatives. A more diversified economy, improved infrastructure, and greater investments in small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are all necessary to achieve SDG 8, according to studies. Economic diversification has been the goal of initiatives like the

Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP), however obstacles like corruption, security concerns, and poor infrastructure prevent complete implementation.

Goal 13: Climate Action Desertification, deforestation, flooding, and the effects of climate change on agriculture are just a few of the environmental issues Nigeria faces. In keeping with the Paris Agreement, the Nigerian government has pledged to cut greenhouse gas emissions; nevertheless, stricter environmental regulations and improved enforcement are required. The significance of tackling environmental degradation through policies that promote climate resilience, sustainable resource management, and enhanced environmental education is emphasized in the literature.

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## DEPENDENCY THEORY AS A CONCEPTUAL LENS ON NEPAD AND THE SDGS IN NIGERIA

An essential framework for comprehending the dynamics of global development, especially in the context of post-colonial countries, is dependency theory. It makes the case that the Global South's reliance on more affluent, developed countries impedes their ability to thrive economically and socially. According to this theory, which was first put forth by academics like Raúl Prebisch, Andre Gunder Frank, and Samir Amin, the underdevelopment of peripheral countries is a direct result of their incorporation into a global capitalist system that exploits peripheral (developing) countries while benefiting core (developed) countries. Dependency theory provides a critical lens through which to assess programs like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which both seek to improve the socioeconomic circumstances of the continent, when applied to Africa, and particularly to Nigeria. With an emphasis on how these frameworks either address or maintain Nigeria's reliance on outside forces, foreign investment, and international trade systems, this literature review explores how dependency theory might shed light on the role of NEPAD and the SDGs in the country's development trajectory.

Frank, André Gunder: Frank (1967), one of the leading proponents of dependence theory, maintained that underdevelopment was a direct result of the core's historical exploitation of the periphery rather than a phase in the development process. The phrase "the development of underdevelopment" was created by him to characterize the ways in which colonial and post-colonial economic structures maintained the periphery's underdevelopment. Another influential contributor in dependency theory, Samir Amin, highlighted the structural economic limitations that global capitalism imposes on periphery countries. He maintained that because the economies of peripheral nations are set up to meet the demands of the core, they will never be able to completely flourish under the current capitalism system. According to world-systems theory, the world is a single capitalist system that is separated into the periphery, semi-periphery, and core. The semi-periphery and periphery are influenced by and reliant on the core's actions, even while the core has economic dominance. We go into greater detail about dependence theory as a conceptual lens below. The division between the "core" (industrialized, developed nations) and the "periphery" (underdeveloped, frequently former colonies) is one of the main tenets of dependency theory.

While peripheral nations are economically dependent on the core, the core nations control capital, technology, and decision-making, hence dominating the global economic system. The periphery is exploited by the center for markets, cheap labor, and raw supplies. Santos (1971). Dependency theorists contend that uneven exchange characterizes the global economic system, with peripheral nations importing completed goods at high rates and exporting raw materials at low prices. Peripheral countries' dependence on core nations is strengthened by this structure, which restricts their capacity to industrialize and grow on their own. It highlights how colonialism historically contributed to the global South's economic and political reliance. Resources and riches were taken from colonized nations by colonial powers, leaving them with weak institutions and economies that hampered their post-independence growth. Dependency theory contends that exploitation within a global system that maintains peripheral countries in a subordinate position is the cause of underdevelopment rather than a state that is simply deficient in specific elements (such as capital or technology). Smith and Todaro (2011).

Modernization theory, which predicted that underdeveloped countries might industrialize and develop similarly to the West, was criticized by dependency theory. Dependency theorists, on the other hand, contended that the global economic system was set up in a style that maintained inequality and made developing nations reliant on it for their expansion and advancement. According to Roxborough (1979), this viewpoint holds that the exploitation of peripheral countries is inextricably tied to the wealth of core nations, resulting in a vicious cycle of underdevelopment and reliance. Because it offers a framework for comprehending the historical dynamics and structural injustices that continue to influence the continent's political, social, and economic institutions, dependency theory is still very relevant to Africa's development. Dependency theory, which emphasizes the lasting effects of colonialism, the role of outside powers, and the global economic system in sustaining these issues, can be used to analyze Africa's development challenges, which range from political instability and economic underdevelopment and poverty to economic underdevelopment and dependence on foreign aid.

The linkages between the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and Dependency Theory

They are intricate, representing both continuity and shift in Africa's approach to development. Dependency Theory first appeared as a critique of the global capitalism system in the middle of the 20th century, mostly because to the work of academics like Samir Amin and André Gunder Frank. It made the case that colonial powers' historical exploitation of African countries and other former colonies, as well as the global economic system's continued reliance on rich countries, were to blame for their underdevelopment. In contrast, NEPAD, which was started in 2001, is an African-led program that aims to improve governance, promote economic integration within the continent, and create sustainable development. Instead of attempting to drastically change the global economic system, it attempts to address poverty, underdevelopment, and the legacy of colonialism within a framework that accepts it (Hilson, 2020). According to dependency theory, African countries must overcome external dominance by lowering their reliance on

international investment, commerce, and aid from the Global North. It promotes decolonization of economic systems and increased economic self-sufficiency. NEPAD, on the other hand, supports a more collaborative approach with industrialized countries while understanding the historical and current effects of global systems on African economies.

In order to promote development, it emphasizes the necessity of international collaboration, technological transfer, and foreign investment. Therefore, rather than attempting to topple the global capitalist order, NEPAD works within the current global system with the goal of increasing Africa's competitiveness (Odugbesan, et al, 2022). According to dependency theory, the unbalanced links between the core (developed countries) and the periphery (developing countries) are maintained as a result of globalization. It argues that this global system limits Africa's progress, with African nations reduced to supplying cheap labor and raw commodities (Owoeye, 2023; Abdulyakeen & Nurain, 2024). Understanding that Africa's growth is contingent upon its incorporation into the global economy, NEPAD functions within the framework of globalization. Increased trade, foreign direct investment, and strategic alliances with international organizations are all promoted by NEPAD. In order to guarantee that Africa gains more fairly from globalization, it also emphasizes the significance of African control over development goals. The political systems in developing nations are frequently criticized by dependency theory for their complicity in maintaining the dependent relationship. It believes that one element sustaining the current state of economic exploitation is corrupt or incompetent governance. In contrast, NEPAD highlights the significance of peace, security, and good governance as the cornerstones of development. A crucial part of NEPAD, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) pushes African countries to pledge to uphold human rights, democratic governance, and anti-corruption initiatives. By lowering internal development hurdles, this governance system seeks to address the root causes of dependency.

Because dependency theory sees collaborations with the Global North as fundamentally exploitative and unequal, it is naturally distrustful of them. However, NEPAD encourages strategic alliances with the commercial sector and both developed and emerging economies. NEPAD emphasizes African-led development and the need for improved conditions of interaction with foreign partners, even as it acknowledges Africa's need for international assistance. This strategy aims to strike a balance between internal agency and external support, representing a move away from total reliance and toward more active involvement in international affairs. NEPAD's detractors from a dependency standpoint: NEPAD's dependence on foreign investment and aid, according to some detractors, reinforces the very dependency that Dependency Theory criticizes. They contend that by interacting with international financial organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), NEPAD's strategy could result in more debt and economic servitude. Furthermore, detractors point out that NEPAD's reliance on the international market for trade and investment could not significantly alter the structure of global inequality or lessen Africa's dependency on outside forces.

Dependency theory criticizes the global economic system as exploitative, while NEPAD offers an alternative vision for Africa's development that emphasizes partnerships, self-reliance, and governance. Their mutual acknowledgment of Africa's historical marginalization and the necessity of development is what connects the two. The more drastic solutions put forth by dependence theory, which calls for distancing oneself from global systems in order to attain true development, contrast with NEPAD's strategy of interacting with them. Nigeria's reliance on international assistance and multilateral alliances has a big impact on the New Partnership for Africa's Development's (NEPAD) capacity to meet Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) objectives, especially those pertaining to infrastructure, health, education, poverty alleviation, and climate change.

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## METHODOLOGY

The approach offers a thorough analysis of the integration of NEPAD and SDGs into Nigeria's development plan, evaluating both the successes and challenges encountered. It also provides practical advice on how Nigeria may overcome obstacles and take full use of the opportunities presented by NEPAD and the SDGs. Nigeria's implementation of NEPAD and SDGs will be thoroughly and robustly analyzed thanks to the mix of case studies, quantitative and qualitative research, and a review of the literature. In order to ensure alignment with NEPAD objectives and SDGs, this phase entails policy analysis examining Nigeria's National Development Plans, including the Nigeria Economic Recovery and Growth Plan, Vision 20:2020, and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy - NEEDS. Global Reports: examining Nigeria's pledges and advancements toward SDG targets by analyzing information from the World Bank, African Union (AU), United Nations, and NEPAD. Government and Institutional Documents: Examining government publications to determine their coherence and alignment with the SDGs, including national SDG reports, NEPAD progress reports, and budgets.

Under the NEPAD framework, case studies are used to analyze particular projects or programs in Nigeria that are intended to accomplish the SDGs. For instance, examining Nigeria's initiatives to combat poverty and how NEPAD facilitates these initiatives through its trade, economic, and infrastructure policies. Healthcare Initiatives: Examples of how SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) has been implemented and how NEPAD's health initiatives have been incorporated into policy infrastructure initiatives by examining the ways in which NEPAD's transportation, power, and road projects support SDGs like SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). By looking at key performance indicators (KPIs) associated with particular SDGs, the evaluation framework below can be used to gauge the advancement, difficulties, and future possibilities of NEPAD and SDG implementation in Nigeria. A comparison with the goals outlined in the NEPAD framework and the National Development Plan. Determine the main obstacles, such as bad governance, limited capacity at the local level, political instability, corruption, and a lack of funds or infrastructure. Additionally, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis was used to comprehend Nigeria's implementation of the SDGs and NEPAD. The positives highlight effective NEPAD programs as well as robust industries (such as trade, youth

empowerment, and agriculture). Limitations point to financial difficulties and bureaucratic inefficiencies as examples of institutional limitations. Threats address issues brought on by political instability, environmental degradation, and insecurity, while possibilities highlight new prospects (such as regional integration, foreign investment, and digital change).

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## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

With noteworthy advancements in education, entrepreneurship, and policy advocacy, NEPAD has made tremendous headway in tackling young empowerment throughout Africa. However, issues including gender inequality, the digital divide, political unpredictability, and unemployment still prevent young empowerment initiatives from reaching their full potential. NEPAD must keep promoting collaborations, utilizing technology, pushing for legislative changes, and making sure that young people especially the most vulnerable are at the center of Africa's development agenda in order to overcome these challenges. Africa's young have the potential to be a key player in the continent's long-term sustainable development if given the proper funding and strategic direction.

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## NEPAD'S ROLE IN REDUCING POVERTY IN NIGERIA

Launched in 2001, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) sought to accelerate Africa's development by promoting sustainable development, economic integration, poverty alleviation, and good governance within a comprehensive framework. Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, has participated in and benefited from NEPAD's programs. Through a variety of initiatives and calculated interventions, NEPAD has significantly reduced poverty in Nigeria, despite ongoing difficulties.

In Nigeria, agriculture continues to be a crucial industry that employs a sizable fraction of the workforce, especially in rural areas (Osimen, 2023; Ozili, 2022). The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), one of NEPAD's most important programs, seeks to increase food security, decrease hunger, and increase agricultural output. Through initiatives to raise agricultural investment, enhance agricultural methods, and increase food production, CAADP has helped Nigeria. Given that a large portion of the rural population in Nigeria depends on farming, NEPAD's emphasis on advancing agriculture as a means of reducing poverty is especially pertinent there. The program finally prompted investment in irrigation systems, rural infrastructure, and agricultural technologies by pressuring the Nigerian government to devote a greater portion of its budget to agriculture. Nigeria agreed to the CAADP compact, which included establishing national goals to enhance food security, agricultural expansion, and poverty alleviation. Nigeria consequently put measures into place to raise the output of important agricultural sectors like maize, rice, and cassava. Poor communities have benefited directly from these programs' contributions to increased food security, agricultural development, and job creation.

Economic development and poverty reduction are closely related, and NEPAD has played a key role in supporting Nigeria's infrastructure development. In order to increase economic prospects

for Nigerians, especially in rural and neglected areas, the NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility (IPPF) has assisted in the planning and funding of important infrastructure projects. Through programs focused at enhancing energy generation, delivery, and access—all of which are vital for promoting economic growth—NEPAD has assisted Nigeria's power industry. For small enterprises, industry, and agriculture to prosper and eventually reduce poverty by generating employment and opportunity, stable energy is essential. In order to improve connectivity, lower transportation costs, and promote trade, NEPAD's infrastructure initiatives have also concentrated on building road and rail networks. In rural areas in particular, improved transportation infrastructure stimulates economic activity by facilitating small-scale farmers' and companies' access to larger markets, which raises their revenue and lowers poverty.

Nigerian healthcare service has improved thanks in part to the NEPAD Health Strategy, which is crucial for reducing poverty. Because of the high prevalence of illnesses like HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria, poor health makes poverty worse by decreasing productivity and raising household expenses. Through initiatives to battle serious illnesses and enhance healthcare infrastructure, NEPAD has aided Nigeria in addressing public health issues. Initiatives to increase access to maternal health care, clean water, and sanitation have improved health outcomes and, eventually, population productivity. For Nigeria's human capital development, NEPAD's emphasis on education—including young skill development—has been essential. Programs for education and vocational training aimed at giving young Nigerians the skills they need for the workforce are essential for ending the poverty cycle.

A key component of NEPAD's development framework is good governance. NEPAD's assistance has improved governance procedures, decreased corruption, and promoted democratic accountability in Nigeria. Nigeria has taken part in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a vital NEPAD program designed to advance good governance throughout the continent. Nigeria has been urged to carry out changes in areas like institutional accountability, public sector openness, and anti-corruption through APRM. Improving transparency and lowering corruption contribute to the efficient use of public funds for initiatives aimed at reducing poverty. Nigeria has been able to resolve inefficiencies in its governance systems thanks to NEPAD's emphasis on bolstering public institutions. Public funds can be more effectively allocated to initiatives that reduce poverty, such as social protection, healthcare, and infrastructure development, when governance is strengthened.

As a major force behind Nigeria's economic expansion and poverty alleviation, NEPAD has supported the rise of the private sector. A thriving private sector generates employment, supports regional businesses, and draws in investments that open doors for the populace. Nigeria's investment climate has improved thanks to NEPAD, increasing its appeal to both domestic and foreign investors. Jobs have been created as a result, especially in the manufacturing, agricultural, and service industries. NEPAD has helped to reduce poverty and create jobs by promoting small enterprises and entrepreneurship. Nigerian public-private partnerships have expanded thanks to NEPAD, which has concentrated on important industries like energy, agriculture, and

infrastructure. These collaborations have provided much-needed funding and experience, resulting in the creation of jobs and economic prospects for Nigerians.

Nigeria's efforts to fight extreme poverty and inequality have been aided by NEPAD's poverty reduction initiatives. The goal of initiatives like financial inclusion, microfinance programs, and social safety nets is to help individuals escape poverty by giving them the money and encouragement they need to start earning a living. To assist Nigerian small business owners, NEPAD has promoted the growth of microfinance services. NEPAD has improved livelihoods and decreased poverty by giving people and small enterprises, particularly in rural regions, access to financing. NEPAD has helped Nigeria create social protection programs for disadvantaged groups, such as food aid and conditional cash transfers. The poorest communities in Nigeria have seen a significant decrease in poverty as a result of these initiatives.

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### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION ON NEPAD'S CONTRIBUTION TO SDG 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**

With noteworthy advancements in education, entrepreneurship, and policy advocacy, NEPAD has made tremendous headway in tackling young empowerment throughout Africa. However, issues including gender inequality, the digital divide, political unpredictability, and unemployment still prevent young empowerment initiatives from reaching their full potential. NEPAD must keep promoting collaborations, utilizing technology, pushing for legislative changes, and making sure that young people—especially the most vulnerable—are at the center of Africa's development agenda in order to overcome these challenges. Africa's young have the potential to be a key player in the continent's long-term sustainable development if given the proper funding and strategic direction.

A significant project, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) aims to reduce poverty throughout the continent, promote sustainable development, and accelerate Africa's economic progress. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8: "Decent Work and Economic Growth" is directly aligned with its primary objective of fostering inclusive, equitable, and sustainable economic growth. SDG 8 advocates for full and productive employment, decent work for everyone, and inclusive and sustainable economic growth. For Africa, where poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality continue to be major issues, this SDG is essential. As the African Union's (AU) overall development framework, NEPAD has contributed in a number of ways to the achievement of SDG 8. With an emphasis on its measures to foster inclusive development, decent employment, and sustainable economic growth, this debate will examine how NEPAD's programs and initiatives have helped Africa attain SDG 8.

NEPAD's Principal Approaches to SDG 8: NEPAD's emphasis on infrastructure development, economic integration, and regional cooperation directly supports inclusive economic growth, one of SDG 8's main tenets. Infrastructure Development: The NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility (IPPF) and other programs have been essential in advancing infrastructure projects throughout Africa, especially in the areas of electricity,

telecommunications, and transportation. These developments have made it easier for businesses to flourish by enhancing communication, transportation, and energy availability, which has increased economic growth and produced jobs. Additionally, increased market integration and commerce across African nations are made possible by improved infrastructure, which promotes regional economic growth (Demdach & Cheever, 2015). NEPAD has been a proponent of economic integration, which has led to the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). In order to facilitate the free flow of people, money, and investments throughout the continent, this program seeks to establish a single, unified market for products and services. AfCFTA will greatly improve intra-African commerce, spur economic growth, and create job opportunities by lowering tariffs and removing trade barriers, all of which will directly support SDG 8.

Sustainable economic growth requires economic diversity, and NEPAD has emphasized industrialization as a means of achieving economic development. Initiatives for Industrialization: NEPAD has worked to encourage the growth of industrial sectors and lessen Africa's reliance on the export of raw materials through its Industrialization Strategy. This approach highlights the necessity of industrialization that produces goods with added value, boosts export earnings, and encourages the creation of jobs. Local entrepreneurship and economic diversification have also been stimulated by NEPAD's support of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). Agricultural Transformation: In many African nations, agriculture continues to be a major source of employment and economic activity. By boosting production, guaranteeing food security, and promoting rural development, NEPAD's Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) seeks to revolutionize agriculture. By generating sustainable livelihoods and jobs, these agricultural innovations—especially in the areas of food production and rural infrastructure—have greatly boosted rural economic growth and job creation, which helps achieve SDG 8.

Creating good work opportunities for all African inhabitants is one of NEPAD's main goals. In recognition of the vital role that employment plays in lowering poverty and promoting social stability, NEPAD has incorporated employment creation into its policies. NEPAD acknowledges that the youth population in Africa is expanding quickly and that creating jobs for them is essential to sustainable development. Through initiatives that emphasize entrepreneurship, skill development, and job creation in industries like renewable energy, ICT, and agriculture, NEPAD has responded by encouraging youth employment. For instance, NEPAD's Capacity Building and Skills Development Programs seek to provide youth with the necessary skills for developing industries, opening doors to respectable and fruitful employment. NEPAD promotes the expansion of SMEs, which are essential to Africa's job development. The NEPAD Business Foundation and the African Investment Promotion Agency seek to enhance the business climate for investments, especially in regions that have the potential to create significant employment. Thousands of employment have been created throughout Africa thanks to NEPAD's support of SMEs and encouragement of entrepreneurship.

In order to guarantee inclusive and long-term economic growth, sustainable economic policies are essential (Ndela & Worth, 2021; Bali & Yang Wallentin, 2020). NEPAD has aided in the creation of policies that balance social, environmental, and economic considerations while fostering sustainable growth. Especially in the energy industry, NEPAD has played a major role in advancing sustainable infrastructure initiatives. The development of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power, has been given top priority in its attempts to expand Africa's access to electricity. Economic growth depends on sustainable energy, and by preventing growth from coming at the price of the environment, NEPAD's focus on clean energy solutions directly supports SDG 8. The goal of NEPAD's African Climate Change Strategy has been to balance environmental sustainability with economic growth. Through its work on resilience and adaptation to climate change, NEPAD has made sure that economic growth is both environmentally sustainable and inclusive. NEPAD has helped create an economy that supports environmental sustainability and growth by encouraging climate-resilient sectors and green technologies.

Businesses, particularly SMEs, need to have access to financing in order to create jobs. For African business owners, NEPAD has aided in the growth of financial systems and credit availability. NEPAD has sought to increase access to banking services, credit, and financial resources for both individuals and enterprises through programs like the African Development Bank's (AfDB) Financial Inclusion Strategy. More jobs and chances for economic growth have resulted from these initiatives, which have aided in entrepreneurship and company expansion. Additionally, NEPAD has advocated for Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) as a way to fund development and infrastructure initiatives. By working with the private sector, NEPAD has been able to draw in investment that can lead to job creation and economic expansion in a number of industries, including transportation, agriculture, and energy.

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## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION ON NEPAD AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: CHALLENGES AND PROGRESS**

Launched in 2001, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a strategy framework designed to solve Africa's problems with poverty, underdevelopment, and isolation. With a strong focus on accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and then the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), NEPAD aims to advance sustainable development throughout the continent. Since youth are viewed as essential to Africa's future development and prosperity, youth empowerment is a major part of NEPAD's plan. When it comes to empowering African youth, NEPAD has achieved significant strides in a number of areas.

Initiatives aimed at enhancing youth education and skill development have received assistance from NEPAD (Robinson & Stanley, 2019). Enhancing access to high-quality education throughout the continent has been the goal of the African Education Summit and collaborations with organizations such as the African Union (AU), United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and other regional organizations. As a result of NEPAD's development projects, programs that emphasize STEM education have received more attention. Through technical

training and scholarships, NEPAD seeks to give young Africans the tools they need to succeed in the quickly evolving labor market.

In order to address young unemployment and promote economic growth, NEPAD has made youth entrepreneurship a priority. NEPAD promotes young people to start and run their own enterprises through programs like the NEPAD Business Foundation, the African Union's Youth Employment Strategy, and its collaborations with private sectors. The topic of financial inclusion is also crucial. The NEPAD Youth Entrepreneurship Program gives young entrepreneurs and start-ups access to capital, coaching, and capacity building. Young people now have more employment options thanks to NEPAD's dedication to infrastructure development, particularly in fields like information technology, renewable energy, and construction.

In order to ensure that governments throughout Africa develop policies that are inclusive of young people, NEPAD has tried to influence policy on youth issues. It has joined forces with the Youth Division of the African Union to promote the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) and the African Youth Charter. In order to guarantee that youth concerns are given priority at the national and regional levels, NEPAD also uses the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which assesses nations' advancements in social policy and good governance. Notwithstanding the advancements, a number of obstacles still stand in the way of youth empowerment under NEPAD:

Youth unemployment is one of the biggest obstacles to NEPAD's youth empowerment strategy. Many young people in Africa, which has one of the youngest populations in the world, are still unable to find steady work. This problem is made worse by the dearth of sectors and enterprises that can take in so many young people. Even though NEPAD has promoted entrepreneurship, many youth-led businesses find it difficult to thrive or grow due to a lack of access to funding, business expertise, and suitable market infrastructure.

Despite NEPAD's assistance for educational reforms, access to and the quality of education remain major obstacles in Africa, especially in rural and conflict-affected areas. Insufficient educational infrastructure, a lack of trained teachers, and significant dropout rates are all present. There is still a problem with the skills that young people learn in school not matching the demands of the labor market. Although NEPAD's emphasis on STEM education is encouraging, it must be combined with initiatives to enhance technical and vocational education.

Initiatives for youth development are nevertheless hampered by political unrest, violence, and bad governance in a number of African nations. Young people's options are restricted in war-torn areas and politically unstable circumstances, particularly with regard to social mobility, work, and education. Furthermore, a lot of African governments give short-term political objectives precedence over long-term programs for young development, which results in uneven or inadequate support for NEPAD-related efforts.

The digital divide is still a major problem in Africa, despite the fact that technology has emerged as a major force behind economic emancipation. Many young people do not have access to computers, the internet, or digital literacy programs, especially those who live



in remote or underserved locations. Through its e-Africa Program, NEPAD has attempted to solve this issue, but much more has to be done. Due to inadequate infrastructure and restricted access, many African youth are falling behind in the global digital transformation, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought attention to the significance of technology for education and jobs.

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## CHALLENGES TO MEETING SDG TARGETS

Nigeria's dependence on outside assistance and collaborations offers both potential and problems for achieving SDG targets, despite the fact that NEPAD was created as an African-led program to encourage development and self-reliance. This dynamic unfolds as follows:

Foreign aid is crucial for financing vital sectors including infrastructure, education (particularly in rural regions), and health (e.g., fighting diseases like TB, HIV/AIDS, and malaria). Nigeria's reliance on help, especially for emergency and humanitarian relief, might support national initiatives to meet these urgent SDG goals. Nigeria frequently receives technical support and capacity building from international partners and multilateral aid organizations to fortify its institutions and governance frameworks. Achieving the SDG targets for infrastructure development (SDG 9) and good governance (SDG 16) depends on this. International collaborations, such as those with the World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB), and bilateral funders, support NEPAD's goals, which include poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, and regional integration. These collaborations provide the funding, resources, and experience needed to further NEPAD's mission. Although help can offer temporary respite, an excessive dependence on outside support can erode native institutions. Governments may prioritize fulfilling donor requirements above putting their own citizens' needs first, which can lower accountability. NEPAD's focus on African ownership and self-reliance, which is essential to its sustainable development goal, is compromised by this. Long-term, sustainable solutions are frequently not produced by an over-reliance on outside finance. For instance, while foreign aid can help with urgent needs, it frequently falls short in addressing the underlying causes of poverty or creating strong local economies. This undercuts SDG goals for sustainable economic development (SDG 9), high-quality education (SDG 4), and economic growth (SDG 8). Foreign aid is frequently erratic and susceptible to changes in the priorities of donors. A donor's internal policies or shifts in world politics may make aid flows less predictable and dependable, which may make it more difficult to meet long-term development goals. For nations like Nigeria, where assistance is frequently required to close gaps in sectors like health and education, this is especially troublesome.

In order to achieve SDG targets like affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9), and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), multilateral partnerships—especially those with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and other international institutions—are essential for funding infrastructure projects. To carry out massive infrastructure projects like electricity grids, transportation corridors, and digital connectivity throughout Africa, NEPAD's Regional Infrastructure Development Initiative (RIDI) is dependent on foreign and

international funding. Public-private partnerships (PPPs), which Nigeria uses to connect with foreign investors, aid in raising money for development initiatives. PPPs can, however, speed up infrastructure development and boost economic growth, but they can also put profit ahead of social goals, which restricts the wider inclusion required to achieve SDGs like lowering inequality (SDG 10). The diverse interests of NEPAD's member states, particularly Nigeria, may limit the organization's attempts at regional integration. Collective action under NEPAD may be weakened if certain African nations favor bilateral ties with international investors or funders over multilateral ones. Africa's Agenda 2063 and its connection with the SDGs, which depend on regional cooperation to solve concerns like climate change, peace, and security, may be hindered by these disjointed approaches. Inequalities within the continent may potentially be made worse via multilateral cooperation. For instance, bigger, wealthier nations like Nigeria might draw a disproportionate amount of foreign investment or help, leaving smaller, less developed nations with less assistance. This undercuts SDG 10's goal of lowering inequality within and between nations.

Good governance is highly valued by NEPAD, and its African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) seeks to encourage openness, responsibility, and democratic governance among African countries. Nigeria frequently faces governance-related conditionalities, like anti-corruption initiatives and changes to public financial management, as a result of its reliance on foreign aid and multilateral partners. These initiatives can help NEPAD achieve its goals of better governance and the SDG targets for justice, peace, and strong institutions (SDG 16). Nevertheless, these efforts may be hampered by corruption and inadequate governance systems. Nigeria's political environment may lessen the impact of outside aid and make it more difficult to accomplish SDG 16 because of issues like corruption, a lack of openness, and ineffective reform implementation.

## CONCLUSION

With its emphasis on infrastructure development, industrialization, job creation, and financial inclusion, NEPAD has significantly aided SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. NEPAD has sought to promote sustainable development, inclusive economic growth, and good jobs through programs including the AfCFTA, NEPAD Infrastructure Project Preparation Facility, and Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). But obstacles including budget constraints, political unpredictability, and structural problems in African countries still impede development. More domestic investment, stronger finance channels, and greater political commitment will be essential going forward if NEPAD is to reach its full potential in accomplishing SDG 8.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEPAD'S FUTURE

**Strengthening Governance and Accountability:** The AU's governance structures must be strengthened if NEPAD is to reach its full potential. Ensuring that African leaders follow democratic values and anti-corruption measures is necessary to increase the effectiveness of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

Member nations must be more politically committed to enacting reforms and holding governments responsible.

**Strengthening Regional Integration:** In order to promote regional integration, NEPAD must give top priority to the elimination of trade restrictions and the standardization of regulations. To increase intra-African commerce and establish a single market, the African Continental Free commerce Area (AfCFTA) must be strengthened. Additionally, cooperative economic policies and cross-border infrastructure projects should strengthen regional cooperation.

**Expanding Domestic Financing:** African nations ought to bear a larger share of the cost of funding NEPAD's projects. To finance projects, governments must give domestic resource mobilization—including through taxes—top priority. NEPAD ought to support laws that promote investments, savings, and the growth of regional capital markets. To draw in private sector investment, public-private partnerships (PPPs) might be investigated further.

**Enhancing Project Monitoring and Implementation:** NEPAD has to create precise structures for project monitoring and assessment. Frequent evaluations will facilitate improved progress monitoring, problem identification, and strategy modification. Overcoming implementation delays requires bolstering NEPAD's institutions' management capabilities.

**Promoting Private Sector Development:** NEPAD ought to establish a favorable atmosphere for the growth of the private sector. This entails lowering operating costs, streamlining corporate registration procedures, and enhancing the regulatory environment. It should also prioritize entrepreneurial initiatives and assistance for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) throughout the continent.

**Addressing Sustainability and Climate Change:** NEPAD should put more effort into addressing sustainability and climate change. Given Africa's extreme susceptibility to climate-related shocks, environmental preservation, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture should receive increased attention. For Africa's growth to be inclusive and sustainable, the program should be in line with the global sustainability agenda.

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