



Report of the Regional Media Dialogue on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

The Vaal, South Africa
19-20 February 2009

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AfDB	African Development Bank
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COMESA	Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
EAC	East African Community
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICS	Information and Communication Service
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
OSAA	Office of the Special Advisor on Africa
PAP	Pan African Parliament
PANOS	
PEPFAR	Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PIDA	Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa
RCM	Regional Coordination Mechanism
REC	Regional Economic Community
SABA	South Africa Broadcasting Agency
STREAM	Strengthening Africa's Media
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations
UMA	Arab Magreb Union
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

INTRODUCTION

The first Regional Media Dialogue between officials of the African Union Commission (AUC), the NEPAD Secretariat, representatives of UN agencies and media executives was held in The Vaal, South Africa, from 19 - 20 February 2009.

The Consensus Declaration and a series of recommendations adopted at the end of the meeting underscore the increasing role of the media in Africa's development and willingness by media organizations to do more on development reporting.

Perhaps more significant was the general agreement by the AUC, NEPAD and UN agencies to facilitate media coverage of their institutions for greater efficiency.

The two-day dialogue created an opportunity for direct contact and interface with senior officials and decision makers from the African Union Commission and the NEPAD Secretariat.

The dialogue created an environment that was conducive for frank and open discussions targeted at clarifying NEPAD and for arriving at specific steps for effectively promoting it at the regional, sub regional and national levels, according to the conveners of the meeting.

Participants agreed to seek ways of strengthening the reporting skills of journalists; while NEPAD officials said that the dialogue had improved their understanding of the information needs of the media.

As the vision of the African Union (AU), NEPAD provides a holistic and integrated strategic framework for addressing Africa's development challenges. Its primary objectives are eradicating poverty, placing African countries individually and collectively on a path of sustainable growth and development, halting the subjugation of Africa in the global economy, and accelerating the empowerment of women.

Two of the cardinal pillars of NEPAD are African ownership and "deep participation by all sectors of society". The second principle feeds on the first: participation depends on "ownership" which is predicated upon a clear understanding of the whole NEPAD initiative – its goals, priorities, vision and mission.

Over the past six years, NEPAD programmes and priorities have been implemented in many respects: African leaders are managing conflicts, championing democracy, embracing human rights, adopting sound macro-economic policies and increasing space for civil society engagement. Also, as many as twenty-nine African countries have so far acceded to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), although only five have completed all of the phases.

However, there are clear indications that a large proportion of the African population still lacks clarity and understanding of NEPAD. Furthermore, there is little awareness of the connection of many initiatives in African countries with the NEPAD.

This is largely because in many African countries, there is little reporting and even much less advocacy on NEPAD, its priorities and implementation. This has a direct impact on the goodwill and understanding that the programme needs and requires for its popularisation and sustainability.

On 9 October 2007 a brainstorming session on the Regional Media Dialogue was held, and it identified some of the general challenges faced by African media, which could explain the overall absence of NEPAD in media.

These include: lack of physical resources and specialized reporters on Africa, low level of local contracting as governments and RECs tend to prefer foreign media, problems of understanding key and technical words and NEPAD issues, and access to free information.

The Johannesburg Regional Media Dialogue was part of this continuous process of seeking ways to keep governments and peoples of Africa abreast with NEPAD – its achievements and challenges.

I OBJECTIVES OF THE DIALOGUE

The main objective of the meeting was to increase understanding of and support for NEPAD as a development framework through wider and deeper journalistic coverage. The regional dialogue aimed to achieve this by creating opportunities for direct contact and interface with senior officials and decision makers from NEPAD Secretariat and the African Union Commission.

II FORMAT

The methodology used during the Dialogue alternated between presentations, exchanges and contributions. Practical experiences of countries and lessons learned from the implementation of NEPAD interventions were presented; followed by discussion. During brainstorming sessions participants were encouraged to express their personal opinions as much as possible. The dialogue effectively promoted sustained interaction among the participants on the one hand; and between participants and facilitators on the other hand. A final evaluation enabled the participants to express their appreciation of the contents of presentations, facilitation and the overall governance of the Dialogue. It is included as an annex to this report.

Files containing all presentations and speeches were made available to participants at the end of the workshop.

III OUTCOMES

The main outcomes of the Regional Media Dialogue on NEPAD were the ***Vaal Consensus*** and ***key recommendations*** and actions points agreed on in four key areas: training and capacity strengthening for the African media, strengthening communication and advocacy Unit at NEPAD Secretariat, professional support and provision of financial and technical assistance to the media to be addressed by the various stakeholders, the media, the African Union Commission/NEPAD Secretariat, UN agencies and the African Development Bank, in the development processes of the continent.

IV PARTICIPANTS

Senior media personnel from all five sub regions of Africa and the Diaspora from various organizations including: *AllAfrica Global Media Group*, *New African Magazine*, *Cameroon Tribune*, *L'express* of Mauritius, *Akhbar El Youm*, Ghanaian *Chronicle*, South Africa Broadcasting Corporation, *PANOS*, *African Monitor*, and South Africa Broadcasting Association participated. Regional institutions and organizations such as Union of Magreb Arab, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the East Africa Community (EAC), the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Pan African Parliament (PAP) represented by their public relations/communications experts also attended the meeting. In addition, members of the Advocacy and Communication Cluster from the following agencies and organizations were present: African Development Bank (AfDB), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (OSAA), UNAIDS, UNDP and the World Food Programme (WFP).

V Date, venue, duration and languages of the media Dialogue

The Regional Media Dialogue took place from 19 – 20 February 2009 at the Riviera Hotel, The Vaal, Guateng Province, South Africa. Simultaneous interpretation services were provided in English and French.

a) Opening session

Three personalities took the floor at the opening ceremony; Ambassador S.O. Willoughby, Acting Chief Executive Officer of NEPAD; Ms Cheryl Larsen Chief Coordination Advocacy and Communication, Programme Development Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA); and Ms Habiba Mejri-Cheikh, Head of Communication Division African Union.

Welcoming participants to the Dialogue, Ambassador Willoughby said that given the individual and collective quality of the participants, he had no doubt that the objectives of the Dialogue would be attained; that is, they would yield concrete proposals on how to get the African media better engaged in reporting African development issues. Practically, he would like to see “dedicated desks to African developmental issues” established in key regional news organizations in the near future, he said, arguing that “after all, not all news from Africa is as negative as what we read, watch or hear on the world news media”. He argued for the strong links between media and development frameworks such as NEPAD, to reflect in the news reports of African journalists.

Ms Cheryl Larsen recalled the commitment of the UN to assist NEPAD, and explained the role of the UN communications cluster in raising awareness of the framework. She said that for NEPAD to succeed it needs support and engagement by and with African people and that it could be greatly enhanced by regular and in depth reporting by the media.

Ms Mejri-Cheikh extended the warm greetings of the African Union Commission to the Dialogue before calling on participants to “create space for sustained discussions on Africa’s development by the regional media and development practitioners. She said that the absence of such permanent dialogue had given room to what she called “widespread misconceptions about the African Union and its NEPAD initiative. On behalf of the AUC, she thanked Ambassador Willoughby for the work well done and congratulated Dr. Mayaki, the newly appointed NEPAD CEO.

b) Participants’ expectations

After the opening session and before going into the Dialogue proper, participants took turns to introduce themselves. Spontaneously, each participant formulated his/her own expectations, most of which related primarily to the following points:

- (i) Sharing of experiences and best practices in the area of development reporting;
- (ii) Better understanding of the NEPAD mechanisms, the role it can play in regional integration, strategies it has used so far and tools for the ‘operationalisation’ of its communication strategy;
- (iii) Ways of reporting on the contents of the different NEPAD Programme and how the regional media could bring on board some of these initiatives/programmes as soon as they are conceived.
- (iv) Better knowledge on financing mechanisms;
- (v) Better understanding of the relationship between NEPAD and the African Union Commission; and,

- (vi) How to build new partnerships among different media organizations and develop exchange networks in the area of development reporting.

The presentation of specific objectives enabled participants to discover a convergence of views between the objectives and their expressed expectations. The workshop agenda was amended and adopted by participants. Amendments related to schedules of sessions on the one hand, and to the practicalities of integrating the reporting into daily editorial meetings on the other hand.

VI THE SESSIONS OF THE DIALOGUE

SESSION I: AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA AND THE MEDIA

Presenters:	<i>Gengezi Mgidlana, Cheryl Larsen, and Emmanuel Nnadozie</i>
Facilitator:	<i>Ayo-ola Olukanni</i>
Rapporteur:	<i>Aloysius Fomenky/ Mathew Wate</i>

This session had three presentations:

- i) Contextualizing NEPAD: The programme, progress and prospects by Gengezi Mgidlana, Special Adviser to the CEO, NEPAD Secretariat.
- ii) UN System Support for NEPAD, by Ms Cheryl Larsen Chief Coordination Advocacy and Communication
- iii) Delivering as one at the Regional Level: The Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) in support of the African Union and its NEPAD Programme by Emmanuel Nnadozie, Chief, NEPAD Support Section at the ECA.

All the presentations aimed at providing the media with as much background information on the NEPAD development framework as possible. This was necessary, as the ensuing discussions revealed, because of the misconceptions and, in some cases, lack of understanding of the nature and work of the NEPAD Secretariat.

Summary of Presentations

In the first presentation, Mr Mgidlana outlined: the Principles of NEPAD, its core objectives, priority areas, strategic frameworks, current level of development, phases of development, and NEPAD's integration into the AU structures and processes. He then short listed the key Principles of NEPAD as follows: African ownership and leadership of the programme and building appropriate relationships with the partners; promotion of good political, economic and corporate governance; accountable leadership and people-centered development; African ownership and leadership of its own development process; establishment of partnerships with stakeholders in each country, with African countries and the international community; promotion and protection of human rights including gender equality; accelerating integration at regional and continental levels.

He recalled the 8 priority areas of NEPAD.

In the second presentation on "UN system support for NEPAD", Ms Cheryl Larson's focus was on the different UN decisions to support NEPAD, with special attention to the work of the Advocacy and Communication Cluster in Africa's development needs. Essentially, the UN provides: financial support; debt relief; helping countries agree on solutions to difficult problems which affect everybody; helping countries to build their nations; technical and institutional support especially in the areas of electoral assistance and good governance; and the UN working to inform Africans about NEPAD.

She recalled that the UN has cooperated with NEPAD at the programme level, through the development of plans and frameworks and that UN staff had been seconded to AU, possibly some would come to the NEPAD Secretariat in the future. UN remains committed to Africa's development; need media to support NEPAD; and the UN hoped to learn from the media present so that UN and other stakeholders can work with media more effectively.

The third presentation of the session was by Mr. Emmanuel Nnadozie, Chief of NEPAD Support Section at the ECA. Mr. Nnadozie explained what the Regional Coordination Mechanism is, and why its creation had become necessary. He defined the RCM as a mechanism for enhancing UN system-wide coherence, coordination and cooperation at the regional and subregional levels to '*deliver as one*' in support of AU and its NEPAD programme. He recalled that the RCM had been established to improve coordination and coherence at the regional level; and to minimize fragmentation and high transaction costs involved in supporting the AU and NEPAD. He outlined the three levels of regional coordination: intra-agency coordination within the UN clusters: between Coordinator and cluster members; inter-agency coordination within the RCM of the UN: between ECA and Cluster Coordinator; and, inter-organizational coordination within the Africa region: between UN and AU, NEPAD, RECs, ADB.

The main achievements of RCM are its ability to strengthen regional coordination of AU and NEPAD support; "Delivering as one" for greater impact on the ground; greater involvement of regional and sub-regional organizations in the RCM process; and institutional support for NEPAD and AU; increased participation in and involvement of African regional and subregional organizations in the RCM process; active institutional support and technical assistance to AU, NEPAD Secretariat & RECs; significant contribution to the implementation of NEPAD priorities, including CAADP, the African Peer Review Mechanism, the Mutual Review of Development Effectiveness, etc. There has also been increased advocacy and strengthened communication in support of the AU and NEPAD at the regional and subregional levels

The main outcomes of the RCM activities have resulted in: institutional commitment buy-in and leadership at the highest levels of UN agencies and organizations; accountability mechanisms; regular communication, information sharing and consultation; experience sharing and knowledge networking among clusters; mainstreaming of crosscutting issues into cluster activities—gender, youth and regional integration; as well as in the preparation of business plans.

Main points arising from the discussion

The key issues that came out of the discussion could be summarized as follows:

- The NEPAD Secretariat has done a lot of good work that has gone either unreported or under-reported by the regional and international media.
- There are some concrete results from the work of the NEPAD Secretariat. However, because of insufficient reporting, the perception that NEPAD does little more than "hold meetings and talk" persists.
- Whose fault is it? As could be expected, apportioning blame generated a lot of debate. What came out clearly though, was the reality that the responsibility is shared: NEPAD's communication and advocacy activities need to be strengthened. There was also the idea that the African journalists need to do their homework, as journalists who are ready and anxious to go out and look for the news.

- The media are primary entry points for continent-wide public awareness. Hence there should be a mechanism for actually bring them on board all development interventions.
- Media work is a business; so if development news does not sell, how is the African media going to cover the news without risking going out of business. This question raised a lot of reactions from the floor that it looked as though African journalists cannot report on development issues, which are nevertheless essential for the continent.
- This raised the question as to whether the African journalist has the necessary insight to actually comprehend the stakes involved in the development of the continent.
- That notwithstanding, it behoves the NEPAD Secretariat to: engage in the marketing of NEPAD; dissemination of professional tools and press releases tailored in a way that the media can readily use; use the language that can be easily understood by all, including the media; go beyond the press release to engage the media through regular interviews, media briefings, etc.
- Too often, it is the Heads of State who speak about the NEPAD; but these are personalities who are not very accessible to the media. There must be someone, who is well known to the media, and ready to answer questions from journalists, be they African or not.
- Media and global environment has changed. NEPAD cannot, and should not stay on the sideline of technological developments. There needs to be a conscious attempt to adapt new technology to its communication needs: electronic media, publishing networks; which media can NEPAD use for its own objectives; new media (podcasts, etc); communication is more than media alone; and, tools for engaging the public are available, must be taken advantage of.
- Gaining information about NEPAD remains a challenge: Old website is not very helpful; lack of up to date information; no NEPAD voice in the continental news media; and the question that kept coming was: Where does NEPAD draw its communications strategy from?
- Participants expressed the fear that if the current trend of not hearing anything about NEPAD (even at global summits) continues the framework might be completely forgotten of.
- If it is interesting to write of success stories, the NEPAD should be ready to welcome informed and constructive criticism because failures are important to note and learn from.

SESSION II: MAJOR AU-NEPAD PROGRAMMES AND PRIORITIES

Presenter: Several presenters
Facilitator: Prof. Fakson Banda
Rapporteur : Aloysius Fomenky

The main thrust of *Session 2* was to provide members of the news media with as much information on the AU and NEPAD as possible. Presentations were made on the following key programmes:

1. Major achievements and Milestones in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), by Prof. Richard Mkandawire, Adviser, Agriculture and Food Security, NEPAD Secretariat;
2. Programme for infrastructure development in Africa (PIDA): The New Initiative for promoting Africa's Regional Infrastructure - By Mr. Gengezi Mgidlana, Special Adviser to the CEO, NEPAD;
3. The African Peer Review Mechanism: An overview by Mr. Sudir Chuckun, APRM Secretariat;
4. Africa-wide NEPAD Capacity Development Strategic Framework (CDSF) and the African Media, by Ms Florence Nazare, Coordinator, Capacity Development Initiative and Country Processes, NEPAD Secretariat;
5. Gender and Africa's Development: Case of NEPAD/Spanish Fund for African Women Empowerment - by Mr. Kossi Toulassi, Project/Fund Administrator, NEPAD Secretariat;
6. The AU/NEPAD Consolidated plan of Action for Science and Technology - by Mr. Aggrey Ammbali, Acting Adviser, ICT, NEPAD Secretariat;
7. The ICT Infrastructure Programme. of NEPAD e-Africa Commission - by Mr. Edmund Katiti, Policy and Regulatory Adviser, NEPAD e-Commission;
8. Knowledge Management and Policy Reform towards Africa's Competitiveness - by Mr. Sloans Chimatiro, Senior Adviser, Fisheries and Focal Point on Knowledge Management, NEPAD Secretariat;
9. The AU/NEPAD African Action Plan: Framework for Promoting Africa's Regional Integration and Global Partnerships - by Bankole Adeoye, Coordinator, External Relations and Partnerships;

Summary of the presentations

Each presentation provided media professionals and indeed, all the other participants with a refreshing recapitulation of the work that has so far been accomplished in different areas by the NEPAD Secretariat and the African Union Commission. The important thing about the presentations was that each presenter outlined the achievements as well as the challenges respective projects face, and tried as much as possible to suggest how the hurdles could be overcome.

Main points arising from the discussion

The discussions that followed the presentation focused on the following key concerns that affect media coverage of the different programmes:

- Generally, NEPAD programme designers and implementers have, perhaps inadvertently, sought to interact mostly with the policy-makers, somehow neglecting the communication and advocacy components of the projects.
- The language used in project documents is often highly technical, an aspect which sometimes obscures the newsworthiness of the project, and even their immediate relevance to the overall development objectives of the continent.
- The absence of structured and functional communication and advocacy components in the project is felt, especially in the packaging of information - as this affects the way in which the media are likely to construct and commission news stories.
- All these shortcomings negatively impact on the media's ability to hold African leaders and policy-makers responsible for the development commitments they regularly undertake.
- Specifically, the APRM for example, ought to seek strong alliances with the media, so that the latter eventually becomes the primary driver of awareness of peer review reports and the implementation of their recommendations.
- Still on the APRM, participants suggested that the programme's secretariat needs to give more relevance to its reports by seeking a clear answer to this central question: is the programme a tool for change or simply a self-reflection mechanism?
- It became clear that, either for lack of adequate professional capacity; the African media had left major development stories largely under-reported. Examples were given of the democratic changes in Ghana and the advancement of women in Rwanda where they now represent fifty-two percent of the national parliament.
- The time has come for the African media to engage in their self-examination, so as to seek frank answers to questions relating to the role of the media in development; the issue of profitability and the choice of news items by the editors;
- How can the media effectively partner in gender issues, helping to create awareness of the opportunities and challenges faced by women in Africa.
- NEPAD should seek to support journalists and press freedoms in African countries where they do not presently enjoy the freedoms they need to effectively do their jobs.

SESSION III: THE AU/NEPAD STRATEGIES FOR ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION

Presenters: Wynne Musabayana and Mr . Louis Napo Gnagbe
Facilitator: Prof. Fackson Banda
Rapporteur: Aloysius Fomenky

Ms Wynne Musabayana, Communication Expert, African Union Commission and Mr. Louis Napo Gnagbe, NEPAD Secretariat Media Director on NEPAD Media relations made presentations for this session.

Main points arising from the discussion

Many of the issues from session 1 were taken up throughout Sessions 2 and 3. This can be seen as a seamless process of critical engagement. The sessions consisted of expert presentations and reactions from the media. The key points of the debate can be synthesised as follows:

A. Media coverage of development, democracy, gender, science and technology

- The media should approach the issue of development as both a *process* and an *event*. This is particularly important given the fact that development efforts, especially in the field of agriculture, have a specific historical context in which they have evolved.
- As a process and event, the media should focus on the “newness” and African ownership of some of the major AU/NEPAD development efforts, such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA).
- Many of the major AU/NEPAD programmes and activities have in-built monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and peer review mechanisms which could offer opportunities for the media to “review” the work of the AU and NEPAD at the national and continental levels.
- A related point here is that such M&E mechanisms should explicitly recognise media as part of any generalised peer review process. This could enable ordinary citizens, through the media, to hold both the AU/NEPAD technocrats and the elected representatives of AU/NEPAD to account for the key development initiatives underway.
- Critical to the two aspects of reporting above is the need for African media to embrace the tenets of development journalism, which offers critical framework for reporting development.

B. AU/NEPAD ‘technocracy’ as a possible hindrance to effective media reportage of development.

- There was a general feeling that the technical language within which many development programmes and activities are expressed could explain journalists’ lack of interest in them.

- A caveat here was that the development-journalistic skills referred to above could be useful in demystifying the language of development, enabling journalists to analyse the underlying issues of poverty eradication, economic growth and sustainable development.
- The two points above reinforce the need for AU and NEPAD to cultivate more structured relations with the media, bordering on training of journalists to understand and analyse development concepts as well as on introducing AU/NEPAD 'technocrats' or experts to the basics of communicating effectively with the media.
- As part of this structured interaction, the establishment of dedicated media liaison was cited as a possible solution.

SESSION IV: ROLE OF THE AFRICAN MEDIA AS STRATEGIC PARTNERS IN THE AU/NEPAD PROCESS

Presenter:	Habiba Mejri-Cheikh, Head of Communication Division, African Union
Facilitator	Shahira Amin
Rapporteur :	<i>Aloysius Fomenky</i>

This was a panel discussion led by the Ms Habiba Mejri-Cheikh, Head of Communication Division, African Union; and Mr. Bankole of the NEPAD Secretariat. The panel discussion gave panelists the opportunity to share their experiences and the challenges they face in covering NEPAD activities. Their website, offers only sparse information. As for the AUC, journalists regretted their inability to access its officials who mistrust African media and prefer to speak to the international agencies.

After the introductory statements by the two officials, most members intervened by way of general recommendations to NEPAD Secretariat; one of which was that it should engage the media as partners and stakeholders so that the media can move away from event-driven coverage to sustainable critical reporting and investigative journalism.

Others called for improvement of the NEPAD website and creation of a media liaison capacity that would allow the media to access relevant officials; for journalists to be provided with contact information; and for the NEPAD Secretariat (especially the communication unit) to put in place a monitoring mechanism so as to be able to track media coverage and consequently, advise give advice on how to improve media performance in general.

The panel discussion then continued with some concrete recommendations on: the importance of capacity building; making better use of African resources; bringing private sector on board; use of more accessible language, so as to make information more accessible to ordinary readers; the need for NEPAD to make more use of FM radio networks, whose numbers have increased tremendously during that last decade, etc.

Panelists again stressed the need for journalists to focus on stories with a human touch, so as to make their reporting more appealing and interesting. One panelist called for the establishment of *NEPAD champion* or *NEPAD ambassadors* in order to give a human face to the programme.

Generally, the following came out clearly from the discussions:

- Need for synergy in communication strategies on NEPAD of all partners and websites alignment and quality control (AU/UNECA and other partners)
- Need for integrated holistic strategic approach. Response: Need to recognize the power of cluster system as working to establish synergy is already happening. Cluster system has led to this Regional Media Dialogue.
- Need for more proactive approach towards the public and requests
- Partnership with media could bring much needed expertise
- Need for timely information to be given to media. Spokesperson needs access to this information in a timely manner himself. Still progress to be made in that regard. Need for working together more among all African organizations at the service of African media
- Need for internal communicators to be well aware of the products they are selling
- It is often challenging to communicate on thematic issues when Heads of States are in town – journalists prefer to good after them.

SESSION V: BRAINSTORMING SESSION ON COMMUNICATING AU/NEPAD PRIORITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS: CHALLENGES AND RESOURCES

Panellists: Brian Kagoro, Amadou Mahtar Ba, John Kaninda, Judith Akolo, and Ihsan (Sonia) Dabbous¹

Facilitator: Shahira Amin

Rapporteurs : Myriam Dessables

The format for this session was a panel discussion among key players within the media. Panelists began the session by expressing the need for the NEPAD Secretariat to build trust with the media; to keep the flow of information between it and the media ongoing; and to occasionally provide feedback on media coverage.

Key issues raised during the brainstorming session

- African journalists have problems dealing with NEPAD news; part of the reason could be that, all too often, it is out of touch with peoples' needs.
- For example, why are the AUC and NEPAD Secretariat so quiet about the problem of food shortages in Africa?
- For the NEPAD/AUC story to sell, they need to tackle the issues that directly affect the ordinary African.

Main points of discussion

- How feasible is it to put in place a team to look closely at the training needs of African journalists.
- The need was expressed for NEPAD to make information readily available to the media in formats that can be immediately used.
- The NEPAD Secretariat should occasionally direct reporters to where concrete developments are being implemented so that NEPAD can get regional headlines beyond the period of AU Summits.
- All too often, NEPAD is perceived as a political, rather than a development tool. Journalists need to constantly bear in mind that NEPAD is people, rather than a government initiative.
- African journalists would do well to network among themselves so as to tell each other about the success stories in their respective countries.
- Positive portrayal of Africa is crucial for African countries to continue to attract aid and investment for development. The problem is whether "good news" can "sell" the newspapers. There is need to strike a balance between the immediate profitability and long term development goals; notwithstanding the fact that the two objectives are not mutually exclusive.
- The importance of regional integration was highlighted as being absolutely critical for Africa's development; while the role of the private sector was underlined as essential as donors alone cannot meet the development needs of the continent.

¹ Please see participants' list for full names and titles of the panellists

- When engaging the media, the NEPAD Secretariat needs to avoid propaganda and public relations pieces. NEPAD Secretariat officials should also talk to publishers, and not end their advocacy initiatives with the reporters.
- The NEPAD Secretariat and the AUC ought look beyond mainstream media and seek partnerships with new and even traditional media channels. For example, community radio is gaining in audience and influence.
- NEPAD should seek strategic media partnerships with media houses such as SABC. Development journalists - identifies some key media support in Africa and see how NEPAD could work with these institutions. AfDB has a system in place to reward those journalists who do good reporting on development issues in general.

SESSION VI: WAY FORWARD AND CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

A - KEY LESSONS LEARNED

B - THE VAAL CONSENSUS

C - RECOMMENDATIONS

Presenter: All participants

Facilitator: Ayo-ola Olukanni

Rapporteur: Aloysius Fomenky

A - KEY LESSONS LEARNED

From the open and frank discussions that characterized the Dialogue, a number of lessons were learned, and if all the stakeholders internalize them, it could be key to better performance by media representatives and the officials of the African Union Commission and the NEPAD Secretariat.

For the media

- Judging by the small number of development stories that come out of Africa each year, one is tempted to conclude that journalists are either not interested, or lack the capacity and resources to engage in development journalism. The excuse that is often touted - that development stories do not sell newspapers, is no longer tenable.
- It is in the long term interest of newspapers editors and owners to encourage reporting on development issues in general, and NEPAD projects in particular, because: when a community gets education, they can buy more newspapers; if they are healthy and have gainful employment, they would read newspapers and advertise in the media.
- If media professionals understand development issues, their news stories would sell, because all development projects have angles that are capable of making good headlines in the news media.
- Both the editors and news media owners need to take the time required to understand the goals of the NEPAD initiative and the structures of its Secretariat. This process is obviously time-consuming; but in the end, it is a worthwhile undertaking.
- The media has several misconceptions about NEPAD. Some or most of them expect it to build roads, schools, stop the fighting in DR Congo and Sudan, etc. Only constant and sustained communication effort can correct these misconceptions.

For the African Union Commission and NEPAD Secretariat

- The NEPAD Secretariat needs an effective communication strategy; with enough professionals to implement it. This cannot, and should not be construed as occasional meetings with the media. Regular communication with the media is very important in awareness and advocacy campaigns.
- The NEPAD Secretariat should strive to see the media as partners; not as just tools for the dissemination of its press releases. In this regard, there is need for institutional buy-in at the level of news media owners.
- The absence of vibrant communication work by the NEPAD Secretariat and the AUC has left the playing field open to a few political figures, on whom the media depends for most information on NEPAD and AUC work. Because some of these leaders are not perceived to be respectful of NEPAD principles (especially as regards democracy and good governance), the media tends to discredit the leaders, along with any NEPAD message they may bear. There is need for the Secretariat to take the lead and even appoint spokespersons within the RECs.
- The regionalization of communication initiatives by NEPAD Secretariat would easily address constraints imposed by the sheer size of Africa and linguistic diversity.
- Sourcing information about NEPAD is very difficult under the current system. However, it is not impossible to do a good story on a development item. The example given by the CNN reporter in Egypt was very illuminating. The message is that writing a good story or doing a lively TV programme depends on the angle and approach used in reporting and writing the story.

For the UN Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM)

- Communication for Development (C4D) is a concept now widely accepted as having an important contribution to behaviour change that is necessary for development at community level. However, NEPAD Secretariat obviously does not have the required resources to effectively engage in it. This means that the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for support to NEPAD and the Information and Communication Service (ICS) of the Economic Commission for Africa need to take the lead and coordinate this at the regional level.
- If Communication for Development initiative were strengthened by the RCM and ICS, then reporting on NEPAD would feed from its activities. This means that the media will no longer be called in just to report on the launch of development projects - they will become part of the planning process, and can actually follow up on the implementation of developmental commitments undertaken by African leaders.
- ECA, and more specifically its Information and Communication Service has capitalized some experience in the area of C4D; having spearheaded the organization of the Strengthening Africa's Media (STREAM) project between March 2006 and October 2007, with funding from DFID. STREAM was a follow-up to its work on the Fourth African Development Forum.

B -THE VAAL CONSENSUS

Conscious of the role of the media can play in the overall development of Africa, and recognizing the role the African media have continued to play in the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), a Regional Media Dialogue was held in The Vaal, Gauteng, South Africa (19 – 20 February 2009) to deliberate on how this role can be strengthened. At the end of the dialogue, Participants agreed on the following Consensus Statement.

We, men and women of the media and participating institutions, meeting in The Vaal, South Africa, renew our commitment towards African development. We acknowledge NEPAD as the development framework of Africa and commit to contribute to its successful implementation.

We strongly believe that the African media should be better informed of the progress in implementation of NEPAD projects and of other initiatives, which contribute towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We engaged specifically on the role of the African media in development, popularizing the continent's priority programmes and strategies for improving the communications and outreach activities of the African Union Commission (AUC) and its NEPAD programme.

As we reflect, we see a positive push for an African Renaissance, particularly in promoting genuine participatory democracy, sustainable development and economic growth.

However, Africa faces a lot of challenges in its development endeavors.

We acknowledge that the African media possess the talent and capacity to positively impact on the lives of Africans; and therefore renew our commitment to disseminate information on Africa in a way that reflects the true realities of the continent.

We pledge to continue to act as watchdogs on behalf of the governed and to hold our leaders accountable to the development commitments they make at national and continental levels.

We shall aim to tell the African development story from an African perspective, but without compromising objectivity.

We urge the African Union Commission, the NEPAD and APRM Secretariats, UN Agencies and other development partners to open active channels of communication and to facilitate the corroboration of information received by the media on the AUC and its NEPAD Programme or on any aspect of its implementation.

We also urge these agencies to take an active role in the development of the African media capacity to work towards the strengthening of the African media for genuine citizen journalism.

Finally, we welcome the opportunity to partner with the AUC, NEPAD Secretariat, Regional Economic Communities, Civil Society Organizations, United Nations agencies and other stakeholders to work towards African development in general.

Adopted at the Vaal, on 20 February 2009.

**Regional Media Dialogue in support of the
New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)
Held in The Vaal, South Africa, 19-20 February 2009**

Key Recommendations

Recognizing the important role the media continue to play in the development of Africa, a Regional Media Dialogue took place in The Vaal, Gauteng Province, South Africa, from February 19-20, 2009, to deliberate on how this role can be strengthened. In this regard, participants agreed on the following recommendations in four (4) key areas addressed to all the stakeholders in the development processes of the continent: the media, the African Union Commission/NEPAD Secretariat, UN agencies and the African Development Bank :

A Training and Capacity Strengthening for the African media

1. AU Commission and NEPAD Secretariat should support capacity development initiatives for African media, particularly training and capacity strengthening to enable them report better on developmental issues, including AU/NEPAD programmes;
2. An external audit of African media's reporting of events on the continent should be undertaken by AU and NEPAD to identify gaps and address the challenges;
3. A team of communication experts and experienced media professionals should be put in place to assess training needs of practicing journalists in view of making concrete proposals for training programmes;
4. Need to undertake a more in-depth analysis of performance of Africa's media working on the continent to better understand the context within which African media operates;

B Strengthening of Comm. & Advocacy Unit at NEPAD Secretariat

5. There is an urgent need to strengthen the communication and advocacy units of the NEPAD Secretariat;
6. A communications audit of the NEPAD Secretariat should be undertaken so as to identify strengths and weaknesses in NEPAD's communication and outreach activities, with a view to emplace a highly effective and functional communications unit;
7. NEPAD Secretariat should strive to provide information in a manner that is media-friendly, relevant and useful to the media and the African audience, and not in abstract and technical language;

8. NEPAD Secretariat should establish clear channels of communication with the media to facilitate more effective dissemination of information about NEPAD, its programme implementation and governance structures;
9. NEPAD Secretariat should take necessary steps to improve the frequency and quality of development information;
10. In marketing the AU/NEPAD brand, advocacy activities should dwell more on sectoral priority issues such as infrastructure, agriculture and food security, health, education, and others which directly affect the ordinary African;
11. Media should seek to communicate the core values and principles of NEPAD rather than simply trying to promote its brand name;
12. Greater awareness of the information required and desired by end-users should be created by the officials charged with the task of communicating NEPAD in the NEPAD Secretariat information;

C Professional support to the media

13. Media should be involved from the beginning of major development projects as partners and stakeholders and not just as tools to be invited to report on the launching of major AU/NEPAD initiatives;
14. African media personnel should routinely interact with the communication staff of the NEPAD Secretariat in order to have adequate knowledge of news preferences. This would help the Secretariat's Communications and Outreach Unit tailor its press releases and feature pieces to the satisfaction of the needs of the media;
15. Media personnel should show more commitment to developmental reporting, since the media also stand to gain and to prosper from the development of other sectors such as infrastructure, education and health;
16. Senior media officials in Africa should act as role models for younger colleagues in their commitment to Africa's development, by exhibiting the positive side and future in development journalism;
17. Partnership with media should be strengthened as this would bring the much-needed expertise to the NEPAD Secretariat. Such partnership could focus on critical sector-specific areas including gender development issues and HIV prevention. This will help create awareness on the opportunities and challenges facing vulnerable groups in Africa;
18. Media organizations should strengthen collaboration with governments, civil society organizations and development partners to facilitate acceleration towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support as well as attaining the MDGs;

- 19 NEPAD Secretariat should seek to support the media and press freedom in African countries where such principles and rights do not presently exist for media practitioners to effectively carry out their duties;
- 20 NEPAD Secretariat should establish a proactive and effective media liaison function which will focus on Africa's national, sub-regional and continental issues;
- 21 AU Commission and NEPAD Secretariat should facilitate media access to officials;
- 22 AU Commission and NEPAD Secretariat should engage non-traditional media outlets in disseminating and informing the African public about NEPAD implementation;
- 23 NEPAD Secretariat should create excellence awards in different categories of human endeavour in Africa and synergize NEPAD related communication strategies for quality control and consistency in information dissemination.

D	Provision of financial and technical assistance to the media
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24. African Union Commission, NEPAD Secretariat, UN agencies, AfDB, RECs, and other stakeholders in the NEPAD platform should allocate enough financial, technical and human resources to match the communication needs of the NEPAD Secretariat;
25. NEPAD Secretariat should be ready to share the burden of communication with African and other willing partner institutions;
26. The NEPAD Spokesperson should provide information to the media in a more timely and efficient manner;
27. Emphasis on the urgent need for sustained investment in the communications sector and the media in particular by Africans and their partners;
28. Explore possibilities of appointing Goodwill Ambassadors for the AUC to serve as champions of African causes;
29. Use of the forthcoming 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa as a platform to attract global attention to positive news out of Africa, particularly the progress being made in the continent's development.

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Regional Media Dialogue

19-20 February 2009 - Gauteng Province, South Africa

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DIALOGUE AGENDA

WEDNESDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2009

08:00–09:00

Registrations

09:00–10:30

Opening

Introduction of Participants by NEPAD Secretariat

Welcoming Address by Ambassador S.O. Willoughby Acting CEO,
NEPAD Secretariat

Defining the Objective of the Dialogue by OSAA

Brief Remarks by the African Union Commission and the UN Advocacy
and Communication cluster coordinator

10:30–11:10

Launch of the new NEPAD website

Group Photograph

11:10–11:25

Tea/Coffee break

Session One:

Africa's Development Agenda and the Media

Facilitator:

Ayoola Olukanni

11:30–12:10

Presentations:

- Dr. Hesphina Rukato, Deputy CEO, NEPAD Secretariat

Contextualizing NEPAD: The programme, progress and prospects

- Dr. Cheryl Larsen, OSAA

UN Advocacy in support of NEPAD implementation

- Emmanuel Nnadozie, RCM Secretariat

Delivering as one at the Regional Level: The Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM)

- Gengezi Mgidmana, Special Adviser to the CEO, NEPAD Secretariat

Update on integration of NEPAD into the structure and processes of the Africa Union

12:10–13:10

Discussion

13:10–14:30

Lunch

Session Two:

Policy Tools for popularizing the NEPAD agenda and priorities

Facilitator:

Nicolas Kotch

14:30–15:00

Presentations:

- Major achievements and milestones in CAAD implementation as new vision of Africa's agriculture

- PIDA: The New initiative for promoting Africa's regional infrastructure
- 15:00–15:30 Discussion
- 15:30-16:00 Presentations:
 - Africa's wide NEPAD capacity development strategic framework: Capacity development for the media
 - Gender and Africa's development: Case of the NEPAD/Spanish Fund for women empowerment
- 16:00-16:30 Discussion
- 16:30-16:45 *Tea/Coffee*
- 16:45-17:15 Presentations:
 - AU/NEPAD Consolidated Plan of Action for Science and Technology
 - The NEPAD ICT Infrastructure Programme: E Africa Commission
- 17:15-17:45 Discussion
- 17:45-18:15 Presentations:
 - Knowledge Management and Policy Reform towards Africa's Competitiveness
 - Africa Action Plan: Fast tracking Africa's integration and global partnerships
- 18:15-18:45 Discussion

FRIDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2009

Session Three: Towards the AU/NEPAD Advocacy and Communication Strategy
Facilitator: Prof. Fakson Banda

- 09:00–09:30 Presentations
NEPAD Secretariat
AUC
- 09:30–10:45 Discussion
Discussants: Panellist
- 10:45–11:00 *Tea/Coffee break*

Session Four: Role of the African media as strategic partners in the NEPAD process
Facilitator: Shahira Amin

11:00–12:00 Panel Discussion
Panellists: Media Personalities

12:00–13:00 Discussion
13:00–14:30 *Lunch*

Session Five: **Brainstorming Session on Communicating AU/NEPAD priorities: Challenges and Resources**
Facilitator: Nicholas Kotch

14:30–16:00 Discussion
16:00–16:45 Wrap up by Facilitators and Lead Institutions

16:45– 17:00 *Tea/Coffee break*

Session Six: **Way Forward and Closure of the Meeting**
Facilitator: Prof Fakson Banda
17:00–17:30 Presentation on Key Outcomes: OSAA
17:30–18:00 Closing Statements by African Union, NEPAD Secretariat, and UN Advocacy and Communication cluster coordinator
NB: At the end of the meeting participants to fill the evaluation form