AN AGENCY DEVELOPING THE AFRICAN UNION’S “AUDA NEPAD” AS A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO ACHIEVE COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to evaluate the role of the African Union Development Agency, AUDA NEPAD, in leading comprehensive development initiatives across Africa. It seeks to determine how AUDA NEPAD’s advisory capacity to member states on development strategies and capacity building can alleviate underdevelopment and promote sustainable growth.

Methods: The study analyzes the agency’s programmatic activities aligned with its recalibrated focus, which includes Human Capital Development, Enterprise, Technology and Innovation, Digitization, Industrialization, Environmental Sustainability, Economic Integration, and Knowledge Management. It examines the agency’s effectiveness in fostering regional and global partnerships and integrating these sectors to boost development.

Results: AUDA NEPAD has shown substantial progress and promising results, especially in its role as a pivotal executive agency for the African Union. It has successfully empowered member states to lead their own development initiatives by providing comprehensive advisory support and promoting best collaborative practices.

Conclusion: The AUDA NEPAD’s renewed mandate is crucial in empowering African nations to capitalize on regional and global partnerships, covering all facets necessary for inclusive and sustainable growth. This executive agency is instrumental in transforming the development landscape of Africa, reinforcing its position as a central vehicle for achieving development goals across the continent.

Keywords: AUDA NEPAD, inclusive development, African Union, partnership, Africa.

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UNA AGENCIA QUE DESARROLLA LA "AUDÁ NEPAD" DE LA UNIÓN AFRICANA COMO ENFOQUE ESTRATÉGICO PARA LOGRAR UN DESARROLLO INTEGRAL EN ÁFRICA

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RESUMO

Objetivo: Este estudo visa avaliar o papel da Agência de Desenvolvimento da União Africana, AUDA NEPAD, na liderança de iniciativas de desenvolvimento abrangentes em toda a África. Ele busca determinar como a capacidade consultiva da AUDA NEPAD para os estados-membros sobre estratégias de desenvolvimento e capacitação pode aliviar o subdesenvolvimento e promover o crescimento sustentável.

Métodos: O estudo analisa as atividades programáticas da agência alinhadas com seu foco recalibrado, que inclui Desenvolvimento de Capital Humano, Empreendimento, Tecnologia e Inovação, Digitalização, Industrialização, Sustentabilidade Ambiental, Integração Econômica e Gestão do Conhecimento. Ele examina a eficácia da agência em promover parcerias regionais e globais e integrar esses setores para impulsar o desenvolvimento.

Resultados: A AUDA NEPAD mostrou progresso substancial e resultados promissores, especialmente em seu papel como uma agência executiva fundamental para a União Africana. Ela capacitou com sucesso os estados-membros a liderar suas próprias iniciativas de desenvolvimento, fornecendo suporte consultivo abrangente e promovendo as melhores práticas colaborativas.

Conclusão: O mandato renovado da AUDA NEPAD é crucial para capacitar as nações africanas a capitalizar parcerias regionais e globais, cobrindo todas as facetas necessárias para um crescimento inclusivo e sustentável. Esta agência executiva é fundamental para transformar o cenário de desenvolvimento da África, reforçando sua posição como um veículo central para atingir metas de desenvolvimento em todo o continente.

Palavras-chave: AUDA NEPAD, desenvolvimento inclusivo, União Africana, parceria, África.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Este estudio tiene como objetivo evaluar el papel de la Agencia de Desarrollo de la Unión Africana (AUDA NEPAD) en la conducción de iniciativas integrales de desarrollo en toda África. Busca determinar cómo la capacidad de asesoramiento de AUDA NEPAD a los Estados miembros sobre estrategias de desarrollo y creación de capacidades puede aliviar el subdesarrollo y promover el crecimiento sostenible.

Métodos: El estudio analiza las actividades programáticas de la agencia alineadas con su enfoque recalibrado, que incluye el desarrollo del capital humano, la empresa, la tecnología y la innovación, la digitalización, la industrialización, la sostenibilidad ambiental, la integración económica y la gestión del conocimiento. Examina la eficacia de la agencia en el fomento de asociaciones regionales y globales e integración de estos sectores para impulsar el desarrollo.

Resultados: AUDA NEPAD ha mostrado un progreso sustancial y resultados prometedores, especialmente en su papel como agencia ejecutiva fundamental para la Unión Africana. Ha empoderado con éxito a los Estados miembros para que lideren sus propias iniciativas de desarrollo al brindar apoyo consultivo integral y promover las mejores prácticas de colaboración.

Conclusión: El mandato renovado de la AUDA NEPAD es crucial para empoderar a las naciones africanas a fin de que aprovechen las alianzas regionales y globales, abarcando todas las facetas necesarias para un crecimiento inclusivo y sostenible. Este organismo ejecutivo es fundamental para transformar el panorama de desarrollo de África, reforzando su posición como vehículo central para alcanzar los objetivos de desarrollo en todo el continente.
1 INTRODUCTION

Since the early 2000s, transformation efforts within Africa have been significantly shaped by the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), which was inspired by the vision of the continent’s founding fathers for a prosperous and interconnected Africa, rich in resources and opportunities for its countries and people. NEPAD marked the first concrete step towards African countries reclaiming leadership in their developmental agenda.

This initiative represented a genuinely African perspective on critical developmental issues, revitalizing African doctrine and focusing on practical approaches to regional integration. Regional economic communities were established as pivotal hubs for policy definition and coordination. The role of the NEPAD Agency was further solidified within the African Union's Agenda 2063, with specific responsibilities assigned for spearheading major future projects across the continent.

In July 2018, during a conference in Nouakchott, the African Union sanctioned the establishment of the AUDA NEPAD Agency. Positioned as a technical implementation agency with a unique identity defined by its statute, AUDA NEPAD is designed to address the priorities of Agenda 2063. The central question of this study revolves around how AUDA NEPAD, as an African Union development agency, serves as a mechanism for driving comprehensive development across Africa?

To explore this question, we employed a descriptive approach to investigate the nature of AUDA NEPAD and the scope of its interventions aimed at fostering development across the continent. This study also focuses on the agency’s capability to encompass all elements within Africa’s developmental agenda for the year 2063, analyzing how it was established and how it continues to evolve. This agency plays an essential role in disseminating best practices in collaboration and partnership, supporting the efforts of African countries to enhance their capacities and leverage both regional and global partnerships necessary for Africa's development needs.
2 THE FIRST AXIS: THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE AGENCY AUDA-NEPAD

2.1 DEFINITION OF AGENCY AUDA-NEPAD

The New Partnership for Africa's Development, commonly abbreviated as NEPAD, is an initiative that encapsulates a vision for the African Union. It was initially drafted and adopted by Egypt, Algeria, Nigeria, South Africa, and Senegal and subsequently approved at the summit of the Organization of African Unity (NEPAD, 2020/12/12) In a significant step during the 31st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, held in Nouakchott, Mauritania, in June 2018, a decision was made to transform the Planning and Coordination Agency of the African Union into the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD), thus creating a development agency for the African Union. This transformation is part of the effective reforms aimed at enhancing the impact and operational efficiency of the Union.

The mission of AUDA-NEPAD is to coordinate and implement priority regional and continental projects to promote regional integration, thereby accelerating the achievement of Agenda 2063. It aims to enhance the capacity of AU Member States and regional bodies, provide advisory support based on knowledge, undertake a comprehensive range of resource mobilization, and act as a technical interface for the continent with all Africa’s development stakeholders and partners (Anon., s.d.).

The Executive Council of the African Union adopted the statute, procedural rules, and structure of the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), which officially succeeded the NEPAD Agency. These decisions were ratified at the thirty-fifth ordinary session of the Executive Council in Niamey on July 4 and 5, 2019. AUDA-NEPAD now possesses a clear mandate and a legal identity, thereby becoming the first development agency in the African Union (Anon.2020/12/10 •).

As a continentally owned agency, AUDA-NEPAD serves as a powerful tool to foster the development and advancement of African countries and entities. Its operations are pivotal to propelling the progress outlined in the agenda 2063, promoting regional integration to ensure accelerated implementation of this agenda. AUDA-NEPAD embodies a strategic vision to renew Africa, linking the African Union Commission,
regional economic groups, and national governments with a commitment to quality and seamless integration.

2.2 DEVELOPMENT AND EVOLUTION: THE ROLE OF THE AGENCY AUĐA NEPAD

During the 31st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Nouakchott, a pivotal decision was made to transform the Planning and Coordination Agency of the African Union into the African Union Development Agency - NEPAD (AUĐA-NEPAD). This transformation is a key component of the comprehensive institutional reforms undertaken by the African Union aimed at enhancing the implementation of AU decisions and the performance of its bodies.

An institutional summit held in January 2017 presented a report on the outcomes of these reforms, which included several critical recommendations. These recommendations addressed the strategic issues essential for the African Union to fulfill the vision of its founding fathers. The summit proposed five comprehensive strategies:

- Focusing on selected continental priorities;
- Reorganizing African Union institutions to better implement these priorities;
- Managing the African Union effectively and efficiently at all levels;
- Ensuring the African Union's financing is sustainably sourced from African nations;
- Strengthening connections with the African populace.

The reform of the NEPAD Agency and its evolution into AUĐA-NEPAD stands as a significant achievement of these reforms. This transformation was designed to bolster the defense and acceleration of the implementation of the African Union's decisions and development programs. With a revised mandate, expanded functions, and increased responsibility, AUĐA-NEPAD enhances relationships between Member States and the agency itself.

This reformation also emphasizes the synergies and complementarities in cooperation between AUĐA-NEPAD, the African Union Commission (AUC), and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Moreover, the reform grants AUĐA-NEPAD proactive responsibilities to implement program interventions at the national, regional,
and continental levels, aiming to fulfill the goals and objectives of Agenda 2063. The main focus of these programs and the overarching reform is to improve the performance of the African Union systems in driving development programs and transformation initiatives that expedite the realization of the first ten-year implementation plan for the agenda.

In this context, AUDA-NEPAD marks a critical phase in the strategy to achieve comprehensive development, addressing numerous challenges faced by the African continent and materializing the aspiration for sustainable economic, social, and cultural transformation.

3 THE SECOND AXIS: THE WORKING PRINCIPLE OF THE AGENCY UDA NEPAD WITHIN THE COMPREHENSIVE REFORM FRAMEWORK ENVISIONING THE AFRICAN DREAM

3.1 ASSIGNED TASKS AND FUNCTIONS BY PROXY THE AUDA-NEPAD

The transformation of the NEPAD Agency into AUDA-NEPAD is a pivotal element of the comprehensive reforms undertaken by the African Union, designed to enhance the impact and operational efficiency of the Union. This reform reflects a strong commitment by member states to develop an Africa-specific instrument dedicated to defending and achieving the development priorities outlined by the African Union. AUDA-NEPAD, with its clearly defined mandate and legal identity, stands as the first development agency within the African Union.

The agency's expanded mandate involves providing knowledge-based advisory support to AU Member States and regional bodies concerning development strategies and capacity development. This role cements AUDA-NEPAD's position as a crucial implementing agency of the African Union, equipped to respond to current trends and development priorities on the continent through the advancement of critical areas such as human capital, institutional development, technology, innovation, digitalization, industrialization, economic integration, environmental sustainability, and knowledge management.

These priority areas are strategically chosen to propel the continent on a path of significant development, aiming to effectuate tangible changes in various aspects of life
including food security, economic opportunities, income levels, education, health, access to clean energy and water, and the reduction of inequalities. (Anon, 2019).

In addition to its advisory role, AUDA-NEPAD provides technical and operational support to the Regional Economic Communities and Member States in developing and executing priority projects and programmes. It assists in building capacities in key sectors such as food and nutrition, energy, water, infrastructure, information and communications technology, the digital economy, natural resource management, climate change, and in the development of institutional and human capital.

The agency also supports the setting and implementation of standards and rules critical to accelerating regional integration and offers technical assistance to the African Union in the implementation of policy recommendations at the continental, regional, and national levels. Moreover, it monitors and evaluates development trends in Africa and the progress achieved towards key continental and global objectives, thereby preparing technical reports for further action.

AUDA-NEPAD also engages in conducting, applying, and disseminating research that supports policy development for member states. It coordinates, facilitates, and enhances cooperation with Africa’s strategic partners and stakeholders to effectively mobilize resources. The agency works closely with African stakeholders and academia, fostering cooperation with the private sector and coordinating between specialized agencies, bodies, and other institutions affiliated with the African Union to create an enabling and supportive environment for achieving the goals and priorities of Agenda 2063.

Ultimately, AUDA-NEPAD acts as a catalyst for Africa's integration and plays a vital role in operationalizing key projects of Agenda 2063, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). It advocates for non-traditional development pathways that emphasize the exchange of experiences and partnerships between African countries, seeking solutions tailored to the social and economic contexts of the countries. (Anon., s.d.).
3.2 AREAS OF INTERVENTION OF AUADA NEPAD WITH THE PURPOSE OF ACHIEVING DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

The priority areas outlined in Agenda 2063 are pivotal and strategic programs aimed at enhancing Africa's economic growth and securing transformative outcomes that are both qualitative and quantitative for the people of Africa. These include ambitions to drive structural transformation, rejuvenate economic growth and social progress, and focus on people-centered development and regional integration. Furthermore, environmental sustainability and capitalizing on the Fourth Industrial Revolution are integral to AUADA-NEPAD’s strategy to respond to the continent's transformation agenda. This response introduces several new priority areas:

3.2.1 First: Economic integration of African countries

Within the framework of economic integration, AUADA-NEPAD has identified four primary areas for intervention: markets, industrialization, infrastructure development, and the establishment of centers of excellence. In the realm of trade and markets, efforts will be concentrated on facilitating the activation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), as well as the ratification of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).

Focus will also be placed on building capacities that enable trade facilitation, implementing the African Commodity Strategy, reforming and strengthening supply chains and logistics, and improving border facilities between African countries. Regarding infrastructure development, initiatives will emphasize implementing ongoing projects under the infrastructure development program by significantly boosting private sector participation in both development and financing.

To bolster economic integration, AUADA-NEPAD will enhance existing centers of excellence in trade and regional integration and assist in establishing new centers across the continent, providing knowledge-based advisory services to Member States and regional bodies as part of the deliverables under this strategic priority.
3.2.2 Second: Industrialization among African countries

The focus on industrialization will revolve around activating the action plan to accelerate industrial development in Africa. This involves supporting the development, promotion, and implementation of rules, standards, and quality assurance within the manufacturing sector, thereby enhancing the integration of the continent’s economies. It is anticipated that AUDA-NEPAD's efforts in industrialization will greatly speed up the diversification of exports to reduce reliance on extractive industry rents, develop small and medium enterprises, and enable African countries to access new markets within the continent. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement, which Algeria is keen to activate, will likely stimulate demand for food imports among African countries and enhance export development on the continent by enabling more countries to integrate into regional and global value chains, thus improving the quality of exports. (Anon., 2019)

3.2.3 Third: Environmental sustainability in Africa

For environmental sustainability, AUDA-NEPAD has delineated five key performance areas: climate change, sustainable management of natural resources and extractive industries, disaster risk management and recovery, ecotourism, and environmental assessment, social impact, and governance.

These interventions aim to support the implementation of the African Union’s strategic priorities, which include conservation efforts for wildlife, combating illegal wildlife trade, and establishing the Great Green Wall for the Sahel-Sahara region to mitigate disaster risks. Efforts will also support the programs of the African Committee of Heads of State and Government on Climate Change and the initiatives of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment. Assistance will be provided to countries and regional bodies to implement multilateral environmental agreements, particularly the Paris Climate Agreement.

Initiatives will also focus on strengthening climate-resilient production and consumption practices, sustainable management of water, forests, and biodiversity, and the development and adaptation of appropriate smart technologies. Additional priorities include improving natural resource management, facilitating access to climate finance initiatives, and developing ecotourism opportunities.
3.2.4 Fourth: Developing human capital and institutions in Africa

The focus will be directed towards four primary areas to enhance the efficiency and success potential of the continent:

- Strengthening and augmenting the efficiency and capabilities necessary for success;
- Facilitating the development of entrepreneurship and employment opportunities;
- Enhancing health, social security, and well-being in the workplace;
- Establishing and fortifying national, regional, and continental centers of excellence for human and institutional capacity development.

These interventions are designed to bolster the capacity of member states and regional economic communities to effectively implement the African Continental Free Trade Area, which promises significant benefits for Algeria and other African nations. Efforts will include modernizing educational and training institutions, developing specialized skills, and supporting curriculum reforms to foster skills applicable to the modern economy.

Additionally, these initiatives will facilitate the implementation of entrepreneurship and employment programs, including the “Decent Work to Transform the Informal Economy between 2018 and 2022” and the implementation of the Africa Statistics Harmonization Strategy (Anon., 2020).

3.2.5 Fifth: Science, technology and digitalization

Interventions under this strategic priority will concentrate on six key areas of expertise:

- Current and emerging technologies;
- Artificial intelligence, machine learning, and big data management;
- The latest research and discoveries;
- Education and training with a strong emphasis on the scientific culture in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM);
- Centers of excellence in science, technology, and innovation;
- Insight, judgment, organization, and ethics in science and technology.
Priority will be given to the implementation of capacity-building programs aimed at enhancing skills and knowledge in scientific and technological innovation, encompassing national innovation systems, information and communications technology, cloud technology, artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data management, and technologies associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution. AUDA-NEPAD will establish digital skills development and innovation centers at national and regional levels, strengthen STEM educational institutions, facilitate skills transfer, and ensure the development of a unified African stance on intellectual property rights (Annual Report 2019, Agency for Development of the African Union).

3.2.6 Sixth: Knowledge Management in african countries

AUDA-NEPAD will enhance its role as a pivotal knowledge broker, catalyst, and regulator by promoting excellence in knowledge management, research, and innovation. The newly established centers of excellence by AUDA-NEPAD will serve as crucial knowledge hubs for the development of resources, research, and best practices. These centers aim to build capacity to achieve national priorities.

Additionally, AUDA-NEPAD will fortify systematic knowledge mobilization processes, including identifying best practices and lessons learned from implementing Agenda 2063. AUDA-NEPAD will also conduct program evaluations and impact studies to determine effective strategies and methods. These evaluations will highlight best practices and identify areas for improvement in programming and delivery, as well as within the global, continental, and national development frameworks (Anon., 2019).

4 CONCLUSION

With the transformation of the Planning and Coordination Agency of the New Partnership for Africa's Development into the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), significant strides have been made. This transition was marked by the approval of crucial management tools, including the statute and procedural rules, and the initial approval of AUDA-NEPAD's structure.

Furthermore, the Agency has recorded substantial progress and outcomes, surpassing planned activities as part of the recalibration of programmatic focus to align
with AUDA-NEPAD's new mandate. Activities are now organized around six key programs: Human Capital Development, Enterprise, Technology and Innovation, Digitization, Industrialization, Environmental Sustainability, Economic Integration, and Knowledge Management.

AUDA-NEPAD will continue to monitor the commitments made to AU Member States and partners from its previous mandate as a technical body of the AU and will enhance its contributions toward the finalization of the governance, operational processes, and structures of the new organization. In collaboration with AU bodies and other strategic partners, AUDA-NEPAD will persist in efforts to fulfill its new mandate and the newly identified priority areas, promoting organizational excellence and quality assurance. AUDA-NEPAD has developed and implemented numerous policies, procedures, and manuals to ensure the quality of strategic and operational planning, program development and implementation, operations, and support services.

Quality assurance procedures adopted by AUDA-NEPAD build on and integrate existing guidelines and tools, drawing inspiration from the new organization's vision, mission, and mandate, as well as its value chain and core functions. The new AUDA-NEPAD quality assurance procedures aim to ensure compliance and alignment with the procedures and guidelines of the Organization and the African Union, as well as benchmarking with good practices of international development organizations, and harmonization of the strategic planning, policy, and legal frameworks of the Member States of the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities.

This includes coordination and quality planning, programming, and knowledge products among variously funded programs and activities to achieve Agenda 2063 outcomes for member states at the continental and regional levels.

Recommendation:

It is vital to coordinate efforts between Algeria and NEPAD on issues of sustainable development from multiple perspectives, especially since Algeria has previously assisted NEPAD in several aspects of maintaining peace and security in the region.

Linking the various areas of development in Algeria to serve the broader African continent, including building roads between the northern countries of the Union and South Africa, and enhancing the free trade area.
Focus on formulating effective economic and social proposals from Algeria, which will strengthen its position within this agency, especially in the current times.

Developing the legislative and legal framework of the African Union countries to ensure the continuity and development of this agency, particularly at this crucial time.
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