

UN-NEPAD Collaboration and UNICEF

A Contribution and Reflection

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Introductory Remarks

The UN family including UNICEF continues to support NEPAD as a programme of the African Union, especially in the areas of human resource development and social issues. NEPAD has proven its value as a mechanism of simultaneously (a) aligning our efforts with the MDGs and (b) providing a framework for coordination with the African Union.

As a result of NEPAD's initiative, the UN family including UNICEF has taken the time to reflect on the relationship with the AU, the RECs, as well as relevant African institutions and member states to see how our relationship will be appropriately enhanced so that we can better support of Africa's development and good governance programmes. NEPAD has played a critical role in highlighting the development and good governance challenges currently facing Africa and the appropriate support of partners. It has provided us with a learning experience and also a focus on what works and does not work in Africa's quest for sustainable development.

NEPAD's mutual accountability strategy has been extremely useful in this endeavour. It has obliged us to adopt common benchmarks for progress, to examine our best partnership practices, and ensured that we adopt a common set of goals and methods. UN agencies and UNICEF have tried our level best to position ourselves to be accountable and result-oriented organizations in the context of supporting Africa's NEPAD-AU programme.

NEPAD also took the lead in articulating the harmony and coherence of the MDGs and their relevance to the UN agencies' aims and efforts.

Working together, the UN agencies have tried to identify collective actions in support of NEPAD while pursuing our respective mandates in the context of the overall AU-NEPAD programme. In 2005 the Human Resource Cluster made a determination that there is no dichotomy between our ongoing work with the African Union and NEPAD programme. They are in fact one and the same. As a result we decided to merge our bilateral support programme with the African Union with our NEPAD-identified programmes. For all practical purposes they are now part of the same programme, taking advantage of the opportunities offered to us by NEPAD to reflect on the development challenges in Africa in the service of enhancing our relationship with the AU.

Our work with NEPAD is coordinated through the Human Resource Cluster, which brings together the AU, NEPAD and the relevant UN agencies. At a joint NEPAD-AU-UN Human Resource Cluster meeting under the auspices of the Commissioner for Social Affairs, Advocate Bience Gawanas, we took the logical step and decided to merge NEPAD initiatives with our ongoing AU support programmes.

As a result, we are confident to report that our bilateral programmes with the African Union have been enhanced and upgraded, and we continue to seek ways and means to work with programmes that lend themselves for joint activities. This is most pronounced in areas of HIV/AIDS, where we have been critical in supporting both. This joint effort was also productively utilized during the preparatory work for the Mid-Term Review of the MDGs. The Human Resource Cluster jointly assisted the AU to the best of its abilities in preparing the African Common Position which was forwarded to the September 2005 Millennium plus Five Summit.

UNICEF Activities

Within UNICEF, at the headquarters, regional and country levels, the NEPAD programmes and their relevance for our work in Africa was extensively discussed and reflected upon at every opportunity. UNICEF ROs have put relevant NEPAD programmes in support of children in all of their regular regional meetings and a special publication was prepared to assist UNICEF country offices as a guide on how to utilize NEPAD programmes in support of their country programmes.

At the African Union level, we have undertaken the following activities:

- a. Child survival in the context of implementing MDG 5 goals. This is a major high-level effort to bring child survival efforts to the highest decision-making levels in the African continent to obtain clear endorsement of strategies and political buy-in. In collaboration with WHO and UNICEF, the AU undertook a review of child survival challenges in Africa. This was framed by the commitments undertaken on MDG 5. The study covered all African countries and the result of the assessment was forwarded by the AU to the July 2005 Summit in Tripoli for reflection and action by the Heads of States. The Summit adopted a Plan of Action to accelerate child survival interventions in Africa with concrete timelines to be reviewed on a continuous basis. This Plan of Action was later adopted at the African Ministers of Health Meeting in Gaborone in October 2005. AU in collaboration with WHO and UNICEF will submit reviews on the state of progress on this. The Summit also decided to include child survival issues as well as the broader children's agenda to be included in the African Peer Review Mechanism. We are supporting the AU to make the necessary technical preparation so that this decision of the AU will be implemented.
- b. The AU Ministers of Health Meeting in Gaborone. The agenda of this meeting, held in October, neatly coincided with the NEPAD health programme for Africa. UNICEF and other UN agencies will continue to support the implementation of the Declaration agreed upon in the Gaborone Ministerial Conference. As mentioned above, a major part of this is a commitment to the MDG on child survival. UNICEF and WHO will jointly assist the AU in implementing the child survival and development component as well as the programme to roll back malaria and the HIV/AIDS Action Plan (in collaboration with UNAIDS). We feel that the NEPAD health programme is given concrete and actionable expression through this AU ministerial meeting declaration. Such political commitments

provide an invaluable legitimation for our work and a constant reference point for collaboration with governments.

- c. Education. UNICEF in collaboration with UNESCO will continue to assist the AU primary education initiative with special focus on girls' education as part of accelerating the MDG commitment. UNICEF, especially WCARO initiative to accelerate girls' education, is in line with the recommendation of the Ministers of Education meeting in Dakar. We continue to support AU in implementing the outcome of the Dakar Declaration. Again we feel that this is also in support of the NEPAD programme on accelerating primary education, and provides a political commitment and framework at the highest level to underpin our activities.
- d. Support for AU's monitoring of the Cairo Declaration (Pan African Conference on Children and Youth, 2001). As mandated by the AU Summit, the AU Commission will assess the status of the implementation of the commitments entered into by member states on children in Cairo, which are to date the most comprehensive high-level commitment on all aspects of child rights and welfare entered into by African Heads of State. (This is the African Common Position that was forwarded to the UNGASS on the World Fit for Children in 2002.) The AU with the support of UNICEF and other partners will undertake extensive review of commitments of each member state leading towards a pan-African conference. The outcomes of this conference will be forwarded to the relevant organs of member states and the AU. This we believe is also an exercise in monitoring commitments, and holding both national governments and partners to account, which we feel is in support of the APRM and the spirit of mutual accountability.
- e. Joint WHO-UNFPA-UNICEF support to the RECs. As part of Human Resource Cluster commitment under NEPAD to support the RECs, UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO undertook an assessment mission, first with IGAD, followed by SADC. UNFPA on behalf of the cluster, with ECOSOC, assisted the RECs in incorporating the human resource focused activities of NEPAD at the subregional level. The assessment mission will be followed by a plan of action. This is work in progress.
- f. UNICEF support for capacity building for the AU Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child. The UN family is supporting bilaterally the AU in the respective areas of the mandates of each agency. UNICEF has entered into collaborative support activities to provide both technical and financial support to the Committee. The details have been jointly agreed upon and the implementation will commence soon. This also includes support in areas of child-related activities such as the HIV/AIDS programme pertaining to children.
- g. UNICEF support to the AU Inter-Sudanese Talks on the Conflict in Darfur. As part of our support for the AU capacity, the head of the Liaison Office has been seconded to the AU, as advisor to the AU Special Representative for Sudan and Chief Mediator of the Conflict in Darfur, Dr Salim Ahmed Salim. Abdul Mohammed's role in the peace talks has continued into early 2006 on the request of the chief mediator. Needless to say, a

resolution of the Darfur conflict is one of the highest priorities for both the AU and the UN, including UNICEF.

Conclusion

Our basic experience reflects the emergent reality that the UN agencies' support for NEPAD and the AU are one and the same. Making a distinction between NEPAD and the AU is no longer helpful or practical.

Engagement with NEPAD has brought considerable added value to UNICEF's ongoing work. It has sharpened our focus on collaboration with a range of partners in developing and pursuing common goals and adopting coordinated working methods across the continent. As the African Union grows in stature and capacity, and increasingly sets the development, governance and development cooperation agenda for the continent, our role in developing policy frameworks has allowed us to leverage considerable influence over the broader African agenda. UNICEF's practical support to the policymaking efforts of the AU and NEPAD is reflected in a series of high-level political commitments that underpin and legitimize our work in every African country, providing us with consistent policymaking partnerships in governmental and intergovernmental institutions.