

African Solutions to Africa's Problems

Recommendations for APRM Implementation

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ABSTRACT

The end of slavery and colonialism in Africa ushered a sense of relief for the African people. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) succeeded to lead African countries towards political independence and self rule. However, African countries were characterised by poverty, underdevelopment and marginalisation from the global economy, long after slavery and colonial rule and domination. Numerous interventions and donor aids by international institutions and structures were introduced to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment in African countries. Aid programmes and assistance created further dependency syndrome leading to the current unacceptable socio-economic and political conditions facing the majority of African countries. The African Union (AU) is trying to create a better life for all Africans and a number of recommendations are made in an attempt to assist African leaders to practice good governance, respect for human rights, uphold the rule of law and to provide effective leadership.

INTRODUCTION

The article makes recommendations to African countries and the African people, leaders in particular to seriously consider good governance and leadership in an attempt to deliver the continent from poverty, underdevelopment and marginalisation. The first part of this article discusses efforts made by the African Union through NEPAD to create a better life for all. The AU adopted the African Peer Review Mechanism whereby countries will assist one another and to share good practices towards growth and development. A number of recommendations will be outlined to ensure the redemption of the image of African countries to identify their problems and find appropriate solutions to identified problems. The recommendations are made when some African regions are busy trying to resolve problems affecting member states. The article makes the recommendations based on the mandate of the African Union in its endeavour to create a better life for all the African people.

A NEW BEGINNING

In an attempt to analyse the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) and the agenda of the African Union's discussions since its inception, one can conclude that African leaders are facing major challenges in the globalising economy. The African Union is trying through its programme for development – New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), to improve governance and leadership in the continent. Good governance and leadership are essential for economic growth and development, therefore it was realised that there will be no world peace or absolute world development when the African continent and its people are marginalised and live in poverty and in an underdeveloped state (Mutharika, 1995:27-30). These challenges require joint and continental initiatives and programmes.

In order to meet Africa's challenges, African leaders have initiated a voluntary peer review mechanism – African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) through which countries will do self-assessment on their socio-economic and political governance matters. The assessment has a potential to forge real partnership between government and the people. The peer review mechanism and the NEPAD project are interdependent and are actually reinforcing. The APRM is meant to monitor compliance with set standards on good economic and political governance and standards in the public service.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

This article provides recommendations and way forward to Africa in an endeavour to ensure that NEPAD and the APRM are implemented to improve governance and leadership in Africa and to improve governance and leadership principles to create a better life for all the African people. Good governance and leadership will ensure that governments formulate and implement policies that will address the socio-economic conditions of Africans and to ensure that African public services respond to citizens' needs (Rondinelli and Cheema, 2003: 251-252). African governments need to come up with appropriate solutions that are African in nature and context, led by Africans, whilst assisted and supported by genuine friends who are true partners in an endeavour to push back the frontiers of poverty.

It is important to note that the recommendations are made based on the fact that Africa is in the midst of transformation, and a socio-economic development process, lying between marginalisation and full participation in world affairs but the reality is that Africa has an uncertain future created by poverty and underdevelopment. Uncertain as it is, Africa will not go back to the colonial past which is responsible for the dependency syndrome, marginalisation, underdevelopment, poverty and unresponsive public services to the needs of citizens.

Hood's model of administration and regional integration

African countries have adopted the Hood's model of administration which has unitary organisation, shared norms and values perfect obedience, full information. The model will facilitate sharing of best practices, especially when peer review results are analysed. African public services should start to implement the prescript of the African Public Service Charter, to reengineer, revitalise and reinvent public services to improve service delivery. In order to



achieve the norm, African governments should create a professional corps of public servants to serve in African public services to deal with the challenges of service delivery and break the back of poverty (Olowu, 2002: 63). Leadership plays a key role in all endeavours to fight poverty and more important is the transformation of public administration to improve service delivery in the public service.

The implementation of policies requires knowledgeable and skillful public servants. Therefore, recruitment and selection processes in the public service should target suitably qualified candidates, who will be hired based on merit and not political affiliations and patronage. Properly qualified personnel would be able to conduct research and come up with the best alternatives based on appropriate data interpretation and analysis (Asante, 1997: 150-152). Such personnel would be equipped to understand the public service legislative framework and the implications of policy formulation and implementation, and to prioritise poverty eradication policies.

Constitutional framework and women in leadership

It is also equally important for African governments to adhere to their countries' constitutions and observe constitutional imperatives to ensure that all areas of the state play their part to meet the mandate of government. Africans should walk the talk and provide essential services to citizens to deliver on their electoral mandates. There is need to promote transparency and accountability in public affairs and to instill public confidence in government. The core responsibility of government is to provide goods and services to citizens and the performance of government is all about service delivery. This is the covenant between the governed and those who govern, to promote public accountability.

Genuine liberation of the continent requires an acknowledgement of gender equity and equality. It is recommended that Africans should commit themselves to improve and promote the status of women. Approaches and strategies should be developed to empower women and to prepare them to take up leadership, management and other posts of authority and influence in public affairs as equals with all members of the population. Women representation in Pan-African Parliament institutions and most African national governments has not yet formed the 40% women target that was declared at the World Conference on Women in Beijing (Baxter, 2002:20-25). Women will be given an opportunity to contribute to growth and development of their countries and push back the frontiers of poverty.

Regional cooperation and African unity

The building of strong African regions is one of the recommendations which will facilitate regionalism and regionalisation in the continent to improve amongst others, transport facilities and networks to ensure that there is cooperation and integration in the continent (Asante, 1997: 150). Improvement in such areas as transport facilities and appropriate infrastructure would promote and enhance free movement of goods and people in the continent and promote cooperation and integration of African countries. Improved communication in the continent will assist countries to share best practices, e.g. in the education sector countries will share best practices around curriculum matters to ensure that products of the education system address the needs of the local economy whilst they are internationally competitive.

African countries should commit themselves to regional integration and cooperation to promote intra-regional trade instead of doing business with countries from other continents at the expense of the African continent. Remember that Africa was not considered as an opportunity for investment hence very little if any, business was transacted with the African continent and even among African countries themselves. Foreign trade advantaged foreign countries at the expense of development within the continent. African regions were reduced to objects of world market economies, dependency and marginalisation which are responsible for the continents' current underdevelopment and poverty (Mbaku and Saxena, 2004:124-125).

There is a need to come up with national, regional and sub-regional mechanisms for conflict resolution and conflict prevention where possible, and the management of conflicting situations. It is essential to protect and realise human rights and respect for the rule of law which are fundamental to achieve development, democracy and stability (Udombana, 2003:59). Conflicts, civil wars and instability cause human displacements whereby people run away from their homeland and live unproductive lives in unstable environments. The African Union is appealing to member states to sign up and submit to peer review processes to comply with the principles of good governance, democratic values and the rule of law. These principles will create environments that are suitable for productive engagements.

Africa requires visionary leadership at all levels of government to ensure that the goals and objectives listed in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and NEPAD priorities are achieved (Nkosi, 2004: 58). Africa needs leaders that are endowed with capacity to reinvent and reengineer public services for successful implementation of policies that will eradicate poverty, including the poverty of opportunities.

Participation, transparency and accountability

Participatory and consultative governance is recommended to deepen democracy, promote, transparency and accountability in public affairs. It is essential to revolutionise public administration to ensure that scarce human capital is skilled and used cost-effectively to improve service delivery. During colonial rule, human resources development, capacity building and skills transfer were not on the agenda of colonial powers. This attitude of the colonial powers towards the African people is one of the reasons the African continent is currently experiencing acute skills shortages to deliver services to citizens. African governments should therefore, adopt a developmental public administration to improve service delivery through the implementation of appropriate policies (Rondinelli and Cheema, 2003: 95). Developmental public administration will assist African governments to use the limited resources for the benefit of the poor masses. Responsible use of limited resources will ensure that the majority of people benefit from the utilisation of such resources and proper management of such resources will help to curb corrupt activities in public affairs.

Corruption robs the poor masses the opportunity to satisfy their needs because the available resources will be used through corrupt activities to benefit a few people that are within the corridors of power and/or their cohorts. Lack of participatory governance means lack or little influence over policy making processes in public affairs resulting in unresponsive public services (Rondinelli and Cheema, 2003: 109 and 121). African governments should ensure that scarce resources are not misdirected through acts of fraud and corruption,



especially in governments that have monopoly of power or authority plus discretionary power or authority without effective control measures and lack of transparency and accountability. African countries should adopt a zero tolerance approach towards corruption and any related acts to ensure that public resources benefit the poor masses of society.

African governments should transact business knowing that the public will demand answers for their actions and none actions. Related to the above recommendations, is the fact that African leaders should create conducive environments to promote investments in the local economy even among African investors (Africa Recovery, 2003: 8). It is reported that approximately 40% of the wealth owned by Africans is invested outside the borders of the African continent. Africans invest largely in foreign markets instead of African markets. There is a need to create conditions that attract local and foreign investment in the continent and to manage, prevent and eliminate capital flight from the continent into foreign countries. The continent should utilise its resources to feed its citizens well.

Capacity building

Africa should embrace knowledge management to promote knowledge sharing. Government machinery should promote the management of knowledge systems to identify the successful service delivery models. There is a need to move from strategy and process analysis to effective programme implementation. Senior public service personnel, especially the top echelon, should understand the interplay between development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of government programmes (Makgalancheche, 2006: 273).

National, regional and sub-regional governments are urged to design programmes which are necessary to build institutional and resources capacities to deal with the spread of scourge of HIV/Aids pandemic and other infectious diseases which have a crippling effect on the human capital. Governments are urged to initiate programmes and projects that will deal with the infected and affected members of the society (Kauzya and Balogun, 2005:3-8). HIV/Aids infections are on the increase in the continent, implying that governments will be required to inject huge financial resources in projects and programmes that deal with HIV/Aids instead of building the capacities and skills for productive purposes. Human capital should be well cared for to promote sustainable development and to reap the benefits of skills development initiatives.

CONCLUSION

African leaders are the custodians of the needs of their citizens which have been disregarded for a long period during colonial rule. They should take it upon themselves to redesign and redeem the image of the continent through the necessary leadership and good governance principles which are pre-conditions for collective development and the eradication of poverty in the continent.

The APRM will assist countries to identify their challenges and to seek alternative collective support and assistance. The recommendations will assist Africans to provide solutions to their problems which are unique to the African continent, created mainly by slavery, colonialism, cold war and even the marginalisation of the continent from participation in world affairs

as an equal partner. These recommendations are made taking into consideration the fact that the size of most African countries and the level of development differs from country to country. Therefore, the challenges facing the African Union require collective efforts from all the African leaders and the African people which are more essential than ever before. African countries should unite in their diversity to collectively come up with programmes that will create a better life for all Africans and to redeem the image of the African continent. African problems require African solutions taking into consideration the unique history and conditions that prevail within the continent, with external support but taking ownership and providing direction and leadership. The recommendations require effective leadership to consider and implement in an attempt to solve Africa's problems which call for solutions brewed and led by Africans.

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