

NEPAD Partnership with the Federal Government of Nigeria: A Path to Peace and Stability

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Abstract

The NEPAD has provided avenue for peace and security development in Nigeria and indeed Africa. Thus, her role in peace building has become relevant to our country at the federal level. This work seeks to look at those areas where NEPAD can partner not just with federal government alone but also with the private sector in order to promote peace and security sustainability in Nigeria. The work therefore, has provided the needed avenue where NEPAD and the federal government partnership can improve the socio-political and socioeconomic development of the Nigerian State.

Keywords: NEPAD, Partnership, Nigeria, Peace and security.

Introduction

The work of Terwase, Abdul Talib & Zengeni (2015) opined that New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has emerged as a crucial player in fostering development and stability in Nigeria. This partnership aims to address significant concerns such as political zoning, peace-building, and support for displaced individuals, particularly in the context of the challenges posed by Boko Haram. This article explores the proposed collaboration between NEPAD and the Federal Government of Nigeria, emphasizing the need for constitutional amendments, peace initiatives, and socio-economic development.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a continental initiative that seeks to promote sustainable development and eradicate poverty in Africa. One of its core objectives is to foster peace and security across the continent, which is particularly relevant for Nigeria, a nation that has faced various conflicts and security challenges over the years. This article explores how NEPAD can engage not only with the federal government but also with the private sector to enhance peace and security sustainability in Nigeria. Nigeria's political tension has always included the issue of ethnic and religious differences and that was one of the reasons of PDP as a political party to introduced zoning and rotation of power into their constitution. This work will look into the need for the amendment of the constitution to accommodate zoning as a principle in Nigeria's constitution.

Proposing Constitutional Amendments for Zoning

Currently, the Nigerian constitution does not recognize the zoning principle, which involves the rotation of political power across the six geopolitical zones. The absence of a constitutional framework for this practice has led to political instability and divisions among parties, particularly in the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Former President Goodluck Jonathan's decision to overlook zoning caused significant unrest, especially among Northern political factions that felt marginalized.

To rectify this issue, NEPAD should advocate for a bill to be presented to the National Assembly, amending the constitution to include provisions for zoning and rotation of power. This amendment could facilitate a more equitable distribution of power between the North and South, as well as among different religious groups. By doing so, NEPAD will promote inclusivity and potentially reduce political tension (Okoko, & Mgbowaji, 2023).

NEPAD's Role in Peace-building Initiatives

In addition to constitutional reforms, NEPAD must engage in peace-building efforts across Nigeria's diverse ethnic landscape. Collaborating with civil society organizations, NEPAD can initiate awareness campaigns that promote unity and discourage hate speech directed at specific ethnic groups (Ojo-Lanre, & Amodu, 2024). These campaigns should not only target urban populations but also reach rural communities, where misinformation can exacerbate tensions (Murithi, 2006).

Furthermore, NEPAD should work closely with the National Orientation Agency to implement sensitization programs at all governmental levels. This collaboration aims to address the root causes of ethnic and religious hatred, fostering a sense of national identity that transcends individual and ethnic interests. By instilling a love for Nigeria, these efforts will encourage citizens to prioritize national unity over personal agendas (Cilliers, 2003).

Addressing the Boko Haram Crisis

The Boko Haram insurgency has severely impacted Nigeria, resulting in widespread violence and displacement. To address this crisis, the Federal Government should consider implementing an amnesty program similar to the one used during the Niger Delta militants' crisis. By offering amnesty to Boko Haram members, the government can encourage disarmament and reintegration into society, ultimately promoting peace in Northern Nigeria (Terwase, Abdul Talib, & Zengeni, 2015).

This initiative also aims to facilitate the return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who have sought refuge in neighboring countries due to the ongoing violence. By addressing the needs of these individuals and providing them with support, NEPAD and the Federal Government can help rebuild communities ravaged by conflict.

Engaging Northern Elders for Reconciliation

A crucial aspect of restoring peace and stability in Nigeria involves the engagement of Northern elders in the reconciliation process. The Federal Government should convene a meeting in Abuja to address the grievances stemming from the disrupted zoning arrangement of 2011. Many Northern leaders feel betrayed by the perceived violation of the power rotation agreement and are seeking avenues for dialogue and reconciliation.

This meeting should aim to foster understanding and cooperation among various political factions, ultimately promoting a more unified approach to governance. By addressing these historical grievances, the government can pave the way for a more stable political environment (Terwase, Abdul Talib, & Zengeni, 2015).

Socio-Economic Development Initiatives

Beyond political solutions, NEPAD can play an instrumental role in promoting socio-economic development in Nigeria. The organization can advise the Federal Government on several critical initiatives, including:

1. **Job Creation for Youths:** High unemployment rates have driven many individuals to join extremist groups like Boko Haram. By creating job opportunities, particularly in the Northern regions, the government can engage youths productively and reduce the allure of militancy.
2. **Housing for IDPs:** The conflict has left many individuals homeless. The Federal Government, through the Federal Mortgage Bank, should establish housing schemes to support IDPs and help them rebuild their lives.
3. **Educational Opportunities:** NEPAD should advocate for scholarship programs aimed at impoverished school-age children. By enhancing access to education, Nigeria can reduce crime rates and foster a more informed and engaged citizenry.
4. **Public-Private Partnerships in Education:** The government should explore successful public-private partnership models, such as those implemented in Malaysia, to enhance educational facilities and promote sustainable development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the partnership between NEPAD and the Federal Government of Nigeria presents a unique opportunity to address the multifaceted challenges facing the nation. By advocating for constitutional amendments, engaging in peace-building initiatives, and promoting socio-economic development, NEPAD can help facilitate a more stable and unified Nigeria. The success of these initiatives hinges on the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders, including government, civil society, and the citizens themselves. Through concerted actions, Nigeria can pave the way toward a peaceful and prosperous future.

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