

## **ASEAN-NEPAD PARTNERSHIP: TOWARDS ADVANCEMENT AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

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### **Abstract**

The African continent is endowed with natural, agricultural and human resources, yet when compared to other continents of the world, in terms of development and growth, the continent is still left behind. In this notion, African leaders through their regional organization known as African Union established the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which sought to partner with African countries and other countries of the world with a view of engaging into programs that would develop the continent. As such, NEPAD partnership with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is targeted at exploring the opportunities in Africa towards the advancement of the continent and, in turn, providing a new ground for ASEAN in achieving her targeted sub-regional economic development. This research paper seeks to explore the opportunities in this partnership where ASEAN countries can benefit from Africa and vice-versa. The research made use of qualitative approach through the conduct of interviews, review of previous literature, internet sources, academic journals and use of available books as sources of data collection. The findings from this research reveals that most of Africa's resources are yet to be tapped; areas such as science and technology, agriculture, transport system, telecommunications, and development of natural resources are key areas where ASEAN countries can invest in through partnership with the NEPAD program implementation. As such, a new ground for ASEAN countries to move in.

**Keywords:** Africa, ASEAN Countries, NEPAD, Partnership, Sub-regional Economic Communities.

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### **1.Introduction**

The world over, partnership between one country and another tends to focus on what they can benefit from each other. This view is not focused on only developed countries, but it cut across all levels of development. As such, many countries depend on one another through a formal way of trading via exports and imports which can be viewed in the sense of acquiring services, as well as obtaining products from one country to another. In the case of African countries, their leaders through the formation of the African Union (AU) went on to form an agency known as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which sought for partnership with African countries and other entities outside Africa (Terwase, Abdul-Talib & Zengeni, 2014; 2015).

NEPAD's partnership thus, yielded expansions to other parts of the world on focusing on the set goals and objectives of her establishment, these forms of partnership cut across Countries, Non-Governmental Organizations, Multinational Organizations, Regional Economic Communities as well as Sub-Regional Organizations, such as European Union (EU),and Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) respectively. The work of Rana (2011) noted for the G20 group to move forward and be more transparent, regional organizations such as ASEAN and NEPAD be invited under the invitation system which is known as ad hoc. This is to show how prominent these two groups "ASEAN and NEPAD" are to the global economy.

As a social-economic framework, NEPAD was established in 2001 by the African Leaders, as a platform to get rid of poverty in African countries through partnership in implementing her developmental program initiatives such as Agriculture and Food Security, Human Development, Natural Resources Management, Infrastructure, Science and Technology, Regional Integration and the promotion of Peace and Security Sustainability in Africa (NEPAD, 2016). These are the areas that this research work intends to focus on, how ASEAN and NEPAD can partner with a view of achieving results that would benefits them. It is therefore, aimed at pushing a dedicated commitment between the two organizations where they can both make advancements in these areas mentioned above, as opportunities are wasting for both business and development towards making a difference.

ASEAN, on the other hand constitutes of assembly or regional economic community of countries that are located in the South-Eastern part of Asia such as Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam. There were five founding States that established ASEAN on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August, 1967 in Thailand's capital city of Bangkok, and the States are: Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. However, other countries later joined the regional economic community of ASEAN such as Brunei Darussalam on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 1984, next was Viet Nam who joined on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 1995, both Myanmar and Laos joined on the same day of 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, 1997, and on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, 1999, Cambodia became the 10<sup>th</sup> State to the member of ASEAN which is the regional body on focus as partner to NEPAD (ASEAN, 2016).

ASEAN countries cannot be left out in the global economy with much of their contributions in many areas such as Agriculture, Information and Communication Technology, and Education, where countries such as Singapore and Malaysia are known for educational tourism while Thailand is known for their Rice production. Their connections with other countries such as Japan, China, South-Korea, United States, Canada, India, Russia, European Union, Australia and New-Zealand has boosted their own economy, especially in the areas such as Transport System, Aviation, Telecommunication, Education, Tourism, Oil and Gas, and Agriculture which also serves as the bases for growth and development of the region (ASEAN, 2016).

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study therefore, is to bring to knowledge where both entities "ASEAN and NEPAD" can foster partnership towards advancement and making a difference between both through creating awareness, consciously organizing members of ASEAN on forging to Africa for investment into the untapped resources, development of both material and human resources for the well-being of the said entities.

## **3. Methodology**

The research made of use of qualitative approach through the conduct of interviews, review of previous literature, internet sources, academic journals and use of available books as sources of data collection.

## **4. Findings**

The findings from this research thus, revealed that, areas such as Agriculture, Transport System, Science and Technology, Natural Resources, Telecommunications, Aviation, Rural Infrastructure, Tourism, and Education are some of the key areas that needs argent attention where ASEAN and NEPAD can partner towards advancement of the regions and making a difference.

#### **4.1 Towards Advancement of Agriculture**

Most of the rural people are farmers, according to World Bank (2016) the world's 70 percent of poor people engages in agricultural activities as sources of employment and income for their living. In the case of Africa, NEPAD's strategic plan on how to deal with this troubling issue of rural poverty and food security in the urban environs requires partnership. As such, NEPAD's agenda for agriculture and food security is posed to improve African countries in the area of agriculture development through access to markets for their products, technical support through mechanized agriculture and assistance through financial support for the farmers to improve on their agriculture (NEPAD, 2016).

Opportunities for ASEAN on Agriculture: There are so many opportunities that are available for ASEAN countries to go into agricultural investment in African countries through the NEPAD led-partnership. Here, NEPAD developed a strategic plan on agriculture through what is known as Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). The program is aimed at providing a platform for key players in the agricultural sector in and outside Africa to partner with NEPAD towards the process of promoting agricultural growth and sustainable development in African States (NEPAD, 2016). This is an avenue for ASEAN countries that engages in agricultural development to invest African countries in areas such as fishing, rice production and other types of agricultural production. Terwase and Madu (2014) cited the Index Mundi (2014) on how Nigeria, the country with the largest population in Africa could not export any single unit of milled rice to other countries since the period of 1999 to 2013 under study in their work. African countries that depend on foreign rice outside Africa as in the case of Nigeria can be a good ground for ASEAN countries invest in such areas of agricultural production in order for them to make profit as well.

#### **4. 2 Towards Advancement of the Transport System**

This is one area that needs serious investment in African countries where their transport facilities are dilapidated. Most of the African countries don't have their national airlines and this serves as a big problem to air travelers. However, some African countries such as Ethiopia, South Africa, Egypt, Kenya, and Rwanda have successful national airlines. ASEAN countries such as Singapore, Thailand, and Philippines can successfully invest into the African market where some of the countries are facing challenges of having national carriers. The question today in some of the African countries could be posed as, where is our national carrier?

Nigeria has huge aviation market yet, the country battles with the same problem of non-national carrier. As such, passengers that are bid for United States who may enter some of the national carriers from the Middle East may have to fly to their headquarters in the Middle East before taken off to the United States. This is the same thing with other African countries that are facing similar problems. Another dimension is that of the high cost of air tickets in most African States which ASEAN countries can take advantage using the Air Asia example. Air Asia is the World's Best Low-Cost Airline that flies across Asia and Australia with a low-cost for their tickets which attract so many passengers. With their presence in Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and India, Air Asia promotes friendly prices for their costumers to fly with them and such model can be implemented in Africa, a continent with huge market (Air Asia, 2016).

#### **4. 3 Towards Advancement of Natural Resources Development**

One of the biggest challenges of Africa's underdeveloped nature is that of lack of technological know-how on how to tap into the available natural resources within the continent. Most of the African countries suffer this same issue. African States are largely known for their endowed resources; yet, many challenges facing the exploration of these resources and to some countries, the problem of untapped resources contribute to the underdevelopment of their people as well

as the growth of the country. Taylor (2006) noted that, the Republic of Chad has it in their environ untapped oil fields and this could contribute to the underdevelopment of the country.

Alden and Alves (2009) observed how African States are endowed with natural resources yet, these resources are mostly untapped. This research paper thus, reveals the need for ASEAN – NEPAD partnership to brighten the hope for these resources to be tapped for the purpose of advancement of the African countries from where they are to where they desired to be. This would create an opportunity for employment for those whom may engage in the process of industrial processing of raw material to finished goods. ASEAN countries that may take advantage of this opportunity in Africa could also contribute to their national income.

Another country that is endowed with natural resources is Nigeria. Terwase, Abdul-Talib and Zengeni (2014) posit in the work how resources such as gold is wasting in the Northern part of Nigeria since the country depends more on oil exploration thereby neglecting most of the country's natural resources untapped which could benefit both the government and her people in Nigeria. These are the areas where ASEAN countries can explore for the purpose of making a difference in African States as well as gaining from them through ASEAN-NEPAD Partnership.

#### **4.4 Tourism Development**

ASEAN countries such as Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore truly invested so much in the development of the tourism industry. Tourism is another area where ASEAN can partner with NEPAD towards the development of Africa's tourism potentials that are neglected. In Malaysia, corporate organizations also contribute to the development of tourism industry as seen in the case of the Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur which gives a symbolic attention to the world as among the world's tallest building (Bunnell, 1999). In Singapore, the Marina Bay is another example of tourist destination where many foreigners find a place for side attraction, while another aspect is that of the Singapore Tourist Pass which aid tourists and visitors in Singapore to use the Trains and Buses with unlimited access to transport system within the designated areas. This is also another area where ASEAN countries can partner with NEPAD in building tourism industries in order to develop the neglected potentials in Africa. The work of Terwase et al. (2015) also noted that, tourism contributes to the growth and development of countries not only in Africa, but it also create sources of employment opportunities to the citizens.

#### **Conclusion**

International organizations and intergovernmental organizations undoubtedly form an alliance to which innovation and creativities can be brought forward for the benefit of mankind. In this notion, ASEAN-NEPAD partnership would promote cordial relationship where both parties can benefits from each other. This paper therefore, focused on some of the key areas in which such partnership can promote the development of African States through the cooperation, contribution and investment opportunities that are found therein. The paper through practical experience, envisage how ASEAN-NEPAD partnership can lead to the development of agriculture, natural resources, transport system and tourism industry among others. The work therefore, recommends ASEAN countries to take advantage of this opportunity that would lead towards the advancement of African States where they could also benefit from and that would also make a difference in promoting their growth and development of the said States.

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