

## NEPAD, RURAL AND LIVELIHOOD BASED STRATEGIES

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When I got this topic, I know something about rural livelihood but I really don't know what NePAD has to say about rural livelihoods in Africa. So I did probably what you would do: I went to see what the African intellectuals whom I knew and respected what they thought and it turned out –to be generally speaking- extremely cynical, quite critical. So I thought this is a good time to give you –the new generation of African intellectuals- a chance to respond. So I took out of their work some questions. As it turns out, I don't know if there is going to be enough differences in your positions. You are not so non-cynical yourselves as far as I can tell.

1. What does the rural livelihood's literature bring to thinking about this question of NePAD's view of poverty in particular and poverty as an underlined cause of conflict?
2. Then what does NePAD really say?
3. What do rural livelihoods say? It says: Currently livelihoods in Africa in rural areas are not just about agriculture. That's its big theme.

Rural livelihoods – not just agriculture

- Diversification: farm and off-farm income
- Differentiation: richer and poorer farmers
- Intra-household difference: gender and generation
- Multi-dimensionality: social support, political voice, dignity ...

### What do you get out of the worlds livelihood literature?

It says that people depend on farm -and off farm income. Diversification is really important. It says there is lots of differentiation. There is not one African small holder. There are richer farmers and poorer farmers. We can't have the same things for all categories. It says 'inter household difference' matters; differences of gender, but also differences of generations. Children don't always do what their parents want them to do. It says that there is multi-dimensionality, a need to consider social support, political voice dignity. Those are things out of the livelihood literature.

### What does NePAD say?

#### ***Chronic hunger and food imports: poverty and the crisis of African agriculture***

*Until the incidence of hunger is brought down and the enormous cost of importing food supplies is reduced by raising the output of farm products which the region can produce with comparative advantage, there is little prospect of achieving the high rates of economic growth to which NePAD aspires. People suffering from hunger are marginalised within the economy, contributing little to output and still less to demand; they are also constantly vulnerable to shocks. Agricultural-led development is fundamental to cutting hunger, reducing poverty, generating economic growth, reducing the burden of food imports and opening the way to an expansion of exports.*

Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)

***The way forward? Increasing the productivity of smallholder farmers***

*It is, however, also possible to look at the food gap as a tremendous opportunity. The existence of such large shortfalls provides a potential market for small farmers, amongst whom poverty and hunger are concentrated, to expand their output and improve their livelihoods, in turn enabling countries to reduce their import dependence. For this to happen in a situation of increasingly liberalised international markets, however, farming within the Region must become more competitive.*

CAADP

It has a fairly conventional focus on straight agriculture, the importance of the agricultural crises is that people are poor, they don't have enough food to eat, and food is being imported. But the answer then is conceived to be increasing productivity so as to make Africa competitive on world markets with a big focus on export production in agriculture.

***The 4 pillars of CAADP***

***(Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme)***

- *Extending the area under sustainable land management and reliable water control systems*
- *Improving rural infrastructure and trade-related capacities for market access*
- *Increasing food supply and reducing hunger*
- *Agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption*

Its four pillars the last of which (this is the comprehensive strategy which was discussed).

First pillar is extending the area under sustainable land management, irrigation etcetera. There is emphasis on agriculture, land increase, irrigation, rural infrastructure, which has already been discussed such as roads, market access, increasing food supply and reducing hunger, and finally agricultural research, technology dissemination and adoption. Those are the pillars.

What are the enabling conditions for this?

***Enabling conditions for African agricultural development must address: (1)***

- *A sparse and dispersed domestic market expensive to serve due to lack of concentrated demand and respectable disposable incomes.*
- *An international market where prices are falling and unstable; which is expensive to access (due to small volumes being traded and long distances from Africa's largely land-locked production sites); which demands sustained quantity and quality levels Africa has difficulty in meeting; where subsidised large-scale producers offer direct competition.*
- *Production is dominated by large numbers of unorganised producers, many unskilled and therefore little able to absorb new technologies.*
- *Farmers are generally small-scale players with no capital or access to capital necessary to improve production and begin to generate investable surpluses.*

*The withdrawal of the state from direct production functions towards creating and maintaining a conducive climate for private sector initiatives has at times been rushed and, in the absence of a sound private sector, has caused severe dislocation of production and farm trade and of support*

*services to them.*

- *Poorly defined property rights inadequate to satisfy requirements of serious investors.*
- *In parts of Africa, the health status of farmers is deteriorating with the advent of HIV/AIDS.*

*African agriculture has for long been starved of investment.*

**CAADP**

There is a very conventional picture which does not correspond very well to what the rural livelihoods literature says about contemporary issues on poverty in Africa. It is a conventional long term old style package. We need more investment; we need more land etc for agriculture. There is nothing particularly new in this development program.

What are the questions that the critics are raising about this, many of which are aware of livelihoods perspectives and based on trying to look at what is going on in rural Africa, now.

### ***Some questions***

- *Is improving productivity enough to get access to markets?*
- *What's in it for women? A longer working day?*
- *How is off-farm employment going to be generated?*
- *How are poor farmers to finance inputs needed for productivity increases?*
- *How can rural areas advance given gaps in social provisioning?*
- *Is this back to the failed recipes of modernisation theory in a neo-liberal guise?*

Is improving productivity really enough to get access to markets? Think about Cancun. What's in it for women: If you are supposed to focus on export agricultural crops, marketed production for export, what about technology that is developed to make life better and easier. What about a better balance within what's happening, between women, men, children. If given that the role of women in agriculture (and it is not only women by the way), but given that women do have a role what does this strategy really offer them? How is off-farm employment going to be generated out of this strategy? We talked about diversification. Over and over again you see people asking for more jobs for youth. Most of the conflict situations –many of them anyway- have related issues of employment of youth to the conditions of recruitment for young soldiers. Can agriculture provide those jobs? Will this strategy provide those jobs? How are poor farmers going to finance these inputs? Subsidies have been cut out, credit is an option, but is that an option for poor farmers as well as the middle peasants with those who are better off? Can people afford to be in debt; even if it is micro credit? How can rural areas advance given gaps in social provisioning? Not just the medicine for Aids, but the basic infrastructure of public health? What is it like in most rural areas? What about the quality of education? Getting rid of school fees may help but you still need funds for investment. Is this really just a return to the old recipes of modernisation within a fairly narrow new liberal approach? Extremely hesitant to challenge anything which says: We might need to keep the state in marketing a bit longer. Or: We need to actually subsidy some of this. Or: We would challenge that making our markets more competitive is enough to give us access to yours. So there is a lot of criticism and I thought these might be questions that could be addressed in our particular session.