

**Beyond the Rhetoric of Development
Partnerships and Towards the Construction
of Equal and Inclusive Global Development
Agenda**

***Lord Mawuko-Yevugah, PhD
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg***

Bonn, 21 – 22 November 2011

Paper focus

- ▶ Critical enquiry into politics of international development cooperation.
- ▶ Problematizes discourses of 'development partnerships', 'policy ownership' and 'poverty reduction' in relation to recent development agenda.
- ▶ Offers alternative interpretation of changes in international aid relations.
- ▶ Draws on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) to critique the 'new' global development architecture.

Key questions

There are three broad questions explored in the paper

1. How can we understand the mainstreaming of 'development partnerships' on global development agenda?
2. What are the implications of the new partnership discourse for international development cooperation and poverty reduction?
3. How can we understand the seeming convergence around ideas of poverty reduction and social development between key global development actors?

Conventional wisdom on new global development architecture

1. Self-reflexivity on the part of Bretton Woods Institutions (e.g. James Wolfensohn's post-Washington Consensus in the form of Comprehensive Development Framework; HIPC; PRSPs).
2. Convergence between UN and Bretton Woods systems around social development (moving towards 'adjustment with human face' finally!)
3. Move towards 'inclusive neoliberalism' or a post-Washington Consensus' originally advocated by Joseph Stiglitz and other long-standing critics such as Jeffery Sachs.

Critical/Postcolonial alternative perspective

- ▶ Draws on critical social theory of Michel Foucault (governmentality) and postcolonial scholars (e.g. Nkrumah, Said, Mudimbe, Mazrui, Mamdani, Mbembe, Abrahamsen).
- ▶ Poverty reduction and Partnerships as new technologies of power that discursively reconstruct, reproduce and performed Africa and other postcolonial societies.
- ▶ Discourse as power: 'practices that systematically form objects of which they speak'. How power relations are embedded in the ways we think of, speak about and relate to others. A discourse analysis thus delineates how the role and place of Africa's postcolonies in the global system are shaped by historical representations and relations of power and knowledge (e.g. 'Orientalization of Africa and other postcolonial societies').
- ▶ Manifestations: complicity of elites; self-regulation and self-discipline; divide and rule; indirect rule (governing at a distance).
- ▶ Commonality with other critical perspectives but offers a fresh perspective in relation to our understanding of mentalities around development interventions (development + mentality: developmentality).

Operationalizing Development Partnerships?

- ▶ MDGs
- ▶ PRSPs
- ▶ NEPAD

MDGs (8th Goal): “Global Partnership for Development”

- ▶ Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system
- ▶ Address the special needs of the least developed countries
- ▶ Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States
- ▶ Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries

PRSPs and Partnerships

- ▶ Calls for partnerships between governments in aid recipient countries, donors and civil society organizations
- ▶ Donors as development partners working with countries and CSOs in design and implementation of national poverty reduction strategies.
- ▶ Country ownership, Civil society participation and good governance presented as representing departure from donor-imposed structural adjustment policies to one that puts developing countries on 'driver's seat'.

A new “holistic and comprehensive integrated strategic framework for socio-economic development of Africa”?

- ▶ Presented as a home-grown African development blue-print –African ownership and leadership
- ▶ Emphasis on accelerated growth and sustainable development poverty eradication and ending Africa’s marginalization in global economic relations.
- ▶ Africa taking charge of its development destiny into the new millennium (African renaissance?) with focus on peace, security, democracy and good governance
- ▶ Building new partnerships between Africa and ‘development partners’ (bilateral and multilateral) with emphasis on trade, foreign direct investment and debt relief

Critique

- ▶ **Emphasis on ‘development partnerships’ under the rubric of new poverty reduction discourse is part of discursive shift in politics of international development in the wake failures of the SAPs and calls for a ‘post-Washington Consensus’**
- ▶ **The seeming convergence around poverty reduction and social development does not represent a radical shift from the neoliberal development agenda.**
- ▶ **New poverty reduction and partnership framework represents IFIs-elites consensus and legitimization of the neoliberal agenda rather than country ownership.**
- ▶ **Neoliberal conceptions of freedom, partnership, ownership or participation in the poverty reduction discourse produces new technologies of governance.**

Conclusion

- ▶ Donor control over the new aid policy agenda. e.g. tying debt relief to PRSPs
- ▶ New avenues/mechanisms e.g. Multi-Donor Budget Supports; Consultative Group Meetings; Policy Consultations.
- ▶ Endurance of SAPs infrastructure, e.g. emphasis on market-oriented approach to development and limits on social expenditure
- ▶ Limited role for key democratic institutional actors e.g. Parliamentarians, decentralized elected officials
- ▶ A new global development paradigm should aim at addressing democratic deficits in development policy making (democratization of development and development policy space)
- ▶ Need for home-grown strategies and solutions with citizens as 'means and ends of development'.
- ▶ Dismantling of structural adjustment era development architecture which prioritizes market-led and trickle-down ideas over developmental states with a focus on effective industrialization, rural development, domestic resource/capital mobilization, and transparency in aid relations.