African Union

BRIEF

APRM BASELINE STUDY

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CEPA PRINCIPLES IN AFRICA

2021
CEPA Principles in a nutshell

The UN Committee of Experts of Public Administration (CEPA) endorsed 11 principles of effective governance for sustainable development which revamp societal, political, and economic strategies and guidelines for enhancing the policy environment for implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and similarly Agenda 2063. It frames the long-term global goals of sustainability, along with eleven principles that address three key contexts.

The first is the context of effectiveness, and this is described and expatiated upon by three areas of competence, sound policymaking, and collaboration. The second is about accountability. The descriptors of this aspect are integrity, transparency, and independent oversight. Finally, the third context is inclusiveness, which includes leaving no one behind, non-discrimination, participation, subsidiarity, and inter-generational equity.

Objectives, key findings, and recommendations of the APRM Baseline Study on CEPA principles in Africa

In the quest of APRM’s eagerness to assist the African Union member states to galvanize the implementation of sustainable development goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063 aspirations, the APRM conducted a baseline study on CEPA Principles. The Study is drafted by the APRM Continental Secretariat in partnership with the African Governance Architecture (AGA), SDGs Centre for Africa in Kigali, and UN CEPA Secretary. The APRM baseline study aims to:

- Provide a comprehensive and actionable account of the state of implementations of SDGs/Agenda 2063 in Africa, particularly the selected 15 AU member states, and relevance to governance.
- Introduce a framework of indicators/benchmarks to measure the implementation of CEPA principles for effective governance of SDGs in Africa. The APRM develops a designated instrument (CEPA questionnaire) which was circulated in 2020 among member states to assess awareness of the captioned principles and country’s implementation of CEPA principles, even under different strategies or terminologies.
- Highlight best practices of AU member states regarding sound policymaking, which speed up action towards implementing Agenda 2030 and 2063 in Africa.
- Identify challenges for building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at national levels.
- Assess the confluence between COVID-19 and progressiveness of CEPA principles within the current African countries’ responses to the pandemic.

APRM new instrument as a benchmark for assessing CEPA principles’ implementation and familiarity in Africa

Thanks to the guidance and collaboration between APRM, African Governance Architecture (AGA) SDGs Center for Africa in Kigali, and a Taskforce of Experts from across the continent (UNEC, Rwanda Governance Board, APRM Researchers, OPHI Advisor Dr. Pali Lehohla), the APRM almost completed a new questionnaire to designated questionnaire to collect necessary data on the application of CEPA principles in Africa. The survey is made of six modules: (i) demographic information; (ii) awareness of the CEPA principles and strategies; (iii) knowledge and understanding of the principles (iv) application of the strategies, (v) challenges, (vi) COVID-19 and CEPA principles. The study aims to map out the status of implementation of the 11 principles in thirteen African countries across all five (5) sub-regions of the African Union. The baseline study identifies national public policy gaps and examines the challenges faced in implementing the principles.
Key findings

- The UN-CEPA principles in the context of the expanded mandate of the APRM, namely of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of Agenda 2063 “The Africa we Want” and UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, are relevant. The principles come in at the right time and should empower the APRM in executing its tasks.

- CEPA principles assure the solid and positive linkages between the institution-building objectives of the 2030 Agenda and all the SDGs. For example, exploring innovative financing sources, managing public-private partnerships, adopting fresh approaches to biodiversity preservation, improving wastewater treatment, strengthening social protection, and expanding access to health care all require adequate capacity institutions. SDG 16 matters for all SDGs.

- In the context of COVID-19, the CEPA principles offer essential recommendations, including strengthening institutions’ competence by leveraging digital Government calls for greatly accelerated action to address digital divides within and across countries. The impact of digital Government on achieving the goals, in general, is determined by social and economic circumstances, for example, relating to the learning environment or access to water and sanitation in combating disease. Also, artificial intelligence and other technologies are expected to shift and disrupt labour markets, which may significantly impact occupational groups involved in public service delivery. Investment in digital Government and related infrastructure, knowledge, and capabilities should thus be considered within the context of national sustainable development strategies and priorities.

- The global SDG Index 2020 and Dashboards infer that Africa continues to make marginal progress on SDGs, with the score increasing by a point annually. However, no African country is in the top 55 countries. North Africa is the best-performing region on average. The best-ranked Algeria only appears 56th with a score of 72.3, meaning that the country is respectively on average 72.3% of the way to the best possible outcome across the 17 SDGs. The best possible outcome being 100%. The Sub-Saharan Africa average score is lower at 53.1, and the region is stagnating towards SDG 2030 targets on goals (1-7), 11, 16, and 17. Performance gaps remain wide ranging, especially on poverty and education. The same findings are corroborated by the 2020 Africa SDG Index and Dashboards.

- SDG 16 progress reporting is improving compared to the last three years. Yet, African countries face various critical statistical gaps to capture most of the indicators pertinent to this goal. Further, institutional aspects of SDG 16 – mainly inclusiveness, effectiveness, and government integrity, are challenged by the pandemic effects in 2020.

- SDGs Financing in Africa in COVID-19 is another challenge listed by many African countries. The decline of Official Development Assistance (ODA), Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and remittances to the Continent will derail most of SDGs overall progress. The respective financing was gravely dented by COVID-19 in 2020. Thus, CEPA principles and its strategies, which include tackling Africa’s long-lasting financial fatigue, i.e., external debt and illicit financial flows, shall be necessary and require accelerated implementation and collaboration.

- The pandemic has underscored the central role of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels that can cope with complex and urgent governance challenges. This includes local authorities and communities working in partnership with civil society and the private sector in crisis response and ongoing contextualised implementation of the SDGs.

- The level of awareness and knowledge of CEPA principles varies across the Continent amongst national executives. The discrepancy between awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the principles is severely vast. Further, the way of implementation of most of the principles and strategies is not standardised. For instance, the claim on knowledge of principles is about 80%, but this can be contrasted with the ability to classify the principles correctly, which shows profound disparities.

- Holistically raising awareness on CEPA principles among national experts concerned about the SDGs’ domestication and implementation is necessary. Out of the twenty-six experts and key informants who responded to the questionnaire, five could not venture an opinion on awareness of CEPA principles; this begs how non-expert practitioners in public administration cope with the familiarity with will and demands of UN-CEPA principles.
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Individual extent to which UN-CEPA strategies are applied (1-least and 4-most applied)
How does COVID-19 affect the implementation of CEPA Principles in Africa?

The pandemic offers an excellent opportunity for African countries to re-prioritise CEPA principles and strategies according to urgent national needs and specificities. The respondents from the captioned 13 African countries identified some CEPA strategies to be improved in response to COVID-19, mainly those pertinent to effectiveness, sound policymaking, collaboration, and dialogue across the levels of government and integrity principles. On another note, other strategies could be threatened under the current COVID-19 pandemic, including long-term debts management, competitive public procurement, fiscal federalism conflict of interests’ policies, and efficient and fair revenue administration.
Recommendations and way forward

• Whatever the national triggers were to apply CEPA principles, the principles are vital for translating policies and legislative frameworks into practical implementation tools. The CEPA principles have furthermore been shown to be amenable and valuable for deployment in periods of pandemics. Country case studies have elevated this evidence. With better awareness, knowledge, and understanding of these principles at all levels, it is possible to deploy them effectively in times of pandemics.

• CEPA principles need to be systematically introduced and integrated into the planning systems of governments. The APRM is encouraged to develop a manual, and a set of guidelines on CEPA Principles and strategies should be designed to raise awareness and understanding of the principles alongside executive training for African national executives. This shall be aligned with APRM activities on strengthening good governance through its national governance structures.

• Given African countries’ specificities and various triggers for adopting CEPA principles and strategies, further detailed country-specific studies should emerge from this APRM baseline study. The countries that voluntarily were CEPA assessment should raise awareness of national executives’ principles and encourage potential national respondents on the APRM-CEPA questionnaire. A close working relationship between the APRM and country national statistics offices is imperative for the principles to pass essential muster of quality.

• A pilot training program on training public administrators on these principles should be initiated without delay. The pilot training can benefit from UN DESA guiding notes on the principles. The APRM will partner with the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) and other regional centres like the SDGs Center for Africa (SDGC/A) concerned about CEPA principles in Africa to develop such programs.

• Synergies with other AU organs, including the AU Commission—mainly African Governance Architecture and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the member states, are encouraged to synergise efforts and cascade the CEPA principles at national levels within the implementation of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 in Africa.

• The engagement of development and strategic partners of the AU, including the United Nations, development financial institutions and other stakeholders, is imperative to provide financial and technical support to AU member states to put CEPA principles into practice.