

**Sustainable Human Development:
A common Challenge To Researchers And Practitioners**

Panel II: Challenges To Researchers And Practitioners

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1.- The basic approach

The international community of researchers and practitioners has developed since the end of the second world war and particularly after the independence of colonised countries in the early 1960s various theoretical instruments supposed to adequately deal with the question of development and the role of international cooperation. Researchers developed notions like modernisation theory, dependency theory etc. and today, we are discussing the really fundamental question of sustainable development. Let me first comment the basic approach of all these notions and the way they have been implemented in the policy of international cooperation. This is a summary of a general analysis where specific and isolated experiences are not highlighted. I will concentrate my analysis on African countries because the development or the lack of development of this continent remains one of the weaknesses of the international community.

1.- The discussion on development has been mainly conducted outside and not in the concerned countries and even more than three decades after independence, the discussion on the concept of development and its implementation for a said country is more a matter for international researchers and practitioners than that for a significant staff of local counterparts.

2.- Development has been conceived by many governments more as a matter of international cooperation than that of an indigenous internal and national affairs

3.- Development in the concerned countries is more a matter for civil servants in some ministries (i.e. foreign affairs, international cooperation, agriculture, energy, etc.) than that for local university researchers, research centres, foundations or for a large section of the public.

4.- Even when some local researchers concentrate their work on the question of development, they mostly are not in a structural contact with the decision makers in the ministries and there are rarely local forums, where they can widely publish or discuss the results of their research for the benefit of their own country. They mostly are publishing these results in international journals far away from their countries, outside the African continent. These researchers know quite well that their papers only have a real chance to be accepted for publication if the themes or ideas are in the main stream of the discussion on development issues in the North. Then the results of their research may some times be noticed and discussed by researchers and practitioners of the North,

but can not be discussed by people concerned in the home country. These research results of African scholars don't really influence the main stream of the discussion on African development in the North and they do not influence decision makers on African affairs.

5.- A large number of institutions in the countries of the North are dealing with the question of development of the South or are specialised on Africa. The results of their research are noticed and discussed sometimes widely, but in any way surely by the Africa-centred institutions, by decision makers on African affairs in the government, within foundations, development oriented structures of churches, Africa oriented NGOs and Africa interested media. But more than that, through the channel of international TV and radio stations, through different publications from the North available in Africa and Africa specialised reviews printed for African readers, the results of researches situated in the main stream of the development concept of a said country of the North are sent to the African population, the African community of researchers and practitioners, just to be noticed and known, but not for a feed back from the concerned Africans to the authors in the North.

6.- The mass of research results on African development remains in the archives and libraries of the North. They are totally unknown even in the very concerned African countries. The great majority of African states do not have adequate structures of public or private libraries or multimedia information centres collecting information world wide for the benefit of the national public. Either there is no national or international political will to do it, or financial problems are the reasons of this failure.

My basic statement therefore is this:

A foreign country can not develop another country. Development is only possible when a said country has developed an indigenous and clear concept of its own development, when the government has a very decisive policy on national development, when the civil society is highly involved and when the population is convinced by the orientations of the state and the action of the organised civil society and is engaged in development issues.

Human beings are the motors of every development. The African population should have the intimate conviction that poverty is not a destiny of any person or nation, and that wealth flows from the individual's awareness of the enormous possibilities in the universe and from the capacity of a community to adequately organise and set up public and private institutions to improve through creativity individual and collective wealth. This can not be essentially done from outside.

When all these parameters are present, then international cooperation may significantly improve its development efficiency and contribute to a sustainable development in a concerned country.

Let me now suggest some guidelines for the challenge facing researchers and practitioners on development in Africa.

2.- Suggestions of some guidelines for the challenge

Guideline 1

- African governments should be encouraged by the international community to strongly develop political will for the promotion of research, creativity and unhindered nation-wide debates on development issues

Guideline 2

- The promotion of research on development issues in African universities, research centres and private foundations should be encouraged through the financing of public and private structures within the countries and through the training of qualified personnel.

Guideline 3

- There should be a centre in each African country, collecting world wide results of research and debates on development, concerning the said country and the immediate region. This collection should include books, reviews, films, reports, and information from the electronic media. This could be done through state structures, private foundations or both.

Guideline 4

- Various forums of debates on development issues should be financially encouraged in these countries. Foundations, churches and NGOS should be assisted in promoting public debates on development not only within the country's elite through seminars and workshops, but also within large sections of the population, including the youth, the women, the peasants, and the workers, mostly excluded from this debate. This can be done in form of „African palavers“ in the village and in city quarters, as it was successfully experimented this year in Cameroon by the Foundation AfricAvenir.

Guideline 5

- Public and private structures for publications, TV and radio diffusion of the research results and debates on development issues in the African countries should be financially encouraged by the respective national governments, private business sponsors and by the international community. A widespread installation of electronic media could be the challenge for the communication flow on this issue from Africa to the North.

Guideline 6

- Institutions of the North should move forward and perceive Africans not only as those who have to be trained. These institutions should be willing to incorporate African scholars and researchers on their staff where concepts on African development are elaborated, their implementation decided on and development projects valued.

Guideline 7

- Structures should be empowered in African countries to allow researchers and practitioners from the North to be invited and publicly discuss their concepts of development, the results of their researches, their valuations of development projects and their action on development in a concerned country

or region. A feed-back of this discussion should be made available to the public in the North.

If these guidelines are respected globally, then the action of those researchers, practitioners and decision makers could efficiently contribute to sustainable development in Africa.

* Professeur Kum' a Ndumbe III founded AfricAvenir, Fondation pour le Développement, la coopération internationale et la paix in Douala, Cameroon and is actually running the research unit „Development Efficiency of International Cooperation with African countries“ at the Free University of Berlin.

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