

Government in africa



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Many countries In Africa have governments that do not perform up to the required standards resulting In economic crises. Neo-liberals and International Financial Institutions malting that this consequently arises from state Intervention . Personally I believe state Intervention Is necessary for sustainable development, equitable distribution of scarce resources and eventually peace and stability. To procure all these, the state has to shoulder various developmental roles. The World Bank identified in its report on development five fundamental tasks of a government.

They are as quoted by Owen Hughes: "(1) establishing a foundation of law, (2) maintaining a non-depository policy environment, including macroeconomic stability; (3) investing in basic social services and infrastructure; (4) protecting the vulnerable and (5) protecting the environment. " (2003: 89) Hughes argues that these roles are not the basic roles of a minimal state but rather sees them as necessary for markets to appreciate what the government does. He goes on to Identify yet another set of seven general functions of government as set out by Anderson James (1989) which

Include providing economic Infrastructure, provision of various collective goods and services, the resolution and adjustment of group conflicts, the maintenance of competition, protection of natural resources, minimum access by individuals to the goods and services of the economy and stabilization of the economy. In this paper I will identify and discuss four developmental roles of the state as stated by Mr.. Milord, a lecturer of Public Administration at the university of Botswana and incorporate into them Andersen's government functions stated above.

The first role that a state in a developing country must obtain as quoted by Mr. Moulds is the development agent role. Here the state focuses on defining national strategic goals for the development of the country. The state comes together with political parties, the executive, Non-Governmental Organizations, Ministers and other important groups of people to come up with these goals as well as how they are going to be achieved.

Implementation is usually done through the bureaucracy or public servants. For example, the national condom strategy and implementation plan is carried out by the Ministry of Health in Botswana.

The state as a development agent also analyzes alternatives and ranks choices on the basis of resource availability. This is to say that the state decides on what should be done first looking at the available resources and the importance of alternatives. For instance the state may decide to build a school at Viewpoints village instead of a clinic on the basis that the clinic will need nurses and doctors whom the country of Botswana is running short of and therefore it would be better to educate children of Pantalets as they are the future nurses and doctors of that village.

Also building a clinic is more costly than building a school. While the structure of a school is limited to classrooms and a staffroom, the clinical structure may require a male ward, female ward, dispensary that whoever may need services of a health worker at a time where there is no clinic in Viewpoints may visit those in surrounding areas such as Calamari and Shoshone health posts. The state also ranks choices looking at their level of importance.

For instance the state might decide to build a bridge before extending the structures of a school and extend a school before refurbishing the council offices. Under this role, the state also takes up national development planning guided by national principles and political values. This is where national development plans (Ends) are created with the purpose of guiding the overall development of the country.

Ends contain government strategies to be followed in the development process, programs and projects to be implemented for the achievement of such strategies and the estimates of expected revenue and expenditure(Government of Botswana). As already stated, national development planning is guided by national principles and in Botswana these principles are Democracy, Development, Self-reliance, Unity and Sotlo.

When coming up with a development plan, each of these principles has to be taken into consideration for the smooth governing of Botswana. Other functions of the state as a development agent include analyzing clientele attachment and reaction to chosen policies, ensuring organizational adaptability to changing development results and challenges as well as providing the institutional framework for development being the organizational structures and their functional relevance.

The second role that a state assumes is the entrepreneur role. Here the state takes responsibility of injecting capital finance for investment since investment is an ideal structure of development. This is done through public finance which relates to the taxing and spending activities of the government. Public finance includes money raised from a variety of sources

by the state. These would include taxes, sales, lotteries, charges, borrowing and many more.

Stabilization of the economy is a function that also falls under this role of state. Fluctuations in the alternating increases and decreases in the level of economic activity require state intervention where the state may use the budget, monetary policy or control over wages or prices to alleviate such fluctuations. Public and private sectors are not mutually exclusive, they should be partners. As an entrepreneur, the state determines the extent of public/private partnerships in the chase for efficiency, effectiveness and equity.

With these concepts at hand, the state may privatized any public institution which would perform utterly well in the private sector. This is so because the private sector is profit oriented and therefore presents high standards of efficiency, effectiveness and equity as compared to the public sector which serves to render services to the public without any profit. The third role is that of a controller/regulator. The state should be able to create an appropriate and conducive legal environment. Justice is a concept that should never be compromised for anything.

In his book, John Rawls summarizes justice in the following manner, " Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue, likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are : 3) The state ensures that the development process is " guided and supported within the

framework of rights as defined by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights discrimination, oppression and exploitation are some of the rights defined.

The state also needs to maintain competition particularly in the private sector. This is basically for the protection of the economically weak from the economically strong because " in he absence of regulation, companies would be able to form cartels, restrict access to their products and fix prices. " . The fourth role of the state in a developing country is that of the state as an assure of individual and group rights. This is in relation to accessibility, participation and control.

The state should be able to identify and define the clientele composition of various development programs, indicate who takes part in the programs and clearly state who the main decision makers are at various levels of the development structure. For example the youth grant policy in Botswana is mainly accessible to Botswana citizens of 18-35 years who have finished their studies and are unemployed. The state is responsible for the resolution and adjustment of group conflicts " in pursuance of Justice, order and stability. . In the instance of the taxation process in Botswana, the taxing strategy is such that those who earn large amounts of income pay a considerable percentage of tax that is not equal to those who earn less income. If the tax percentage was fixed across all income classes, then it would mean that the high income class pays less tax as compared to the middle and low class income. This could actually cause an upheaval from the low income class thus the need for government intervention in such issues.

The state assumes many different roles as seen in the preceding paragraphs. These roles include amongst others the state as a development agent. In this role the state has to provide the institutional framework for development, define national strategic goals for the development of a country and create national development plans guided by national principles and political values.