

# Underdevelopment in africa essay



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African countries seem not to show significant change in social, economic and political developments in years despite aid given to these countries. In this paper I will define the concept development and explain different dimensions of development. I will also elaborate why it's highly stressed with third world countries. I will also define the term ' underdevelopment,' then explain why most African nations are affected by it. I will take the Zambian case as an example to try and explain why African countries are underdeveloped and conclude with recommendations on how this issue could be resolved.

The concept ' development' is neither new nor old. Development is a continuously changing and dynamic concept. Since the beginning of civilization it has been taking shapes and dimensions. The nature of development as seen in the early 1990s differs considerably from that seen in the early 1950s. (Sapru 2009). According to the Brandt Commission Report (1980), " Development will never be and can never be defined to universal satisfaction. " In social science development is the most depreciated term used says Upholff and Ilchman (1972).

Many have defined development in terms of increase in national economy, while others include social improvement in it and still others in terms of increase in the capacity of a political system. Others think Development has no difference with modernization. Development can then be said to be multidimensional in its nature as it holds many dimensions. There are different facets of development being economic development, social development, political development as well as development administration and administrative development.

Sapru R. K says, " economic, political, social and administrative development may be viewed as emerging from development without being development. So, while defining the concept of development, it is necessary to take an integrated approach. " Michael Todaro defines development as a multi – dimensional process involving changes in structures, altitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty.

Chi-Yuen defines development as " a process of societal transformation from a traditional society to a modern society, and such a transformation is also known as Modernism. " This definition seems to hold more to me as development involves transformation of the entire economic and social structure. Sapru, R. K says that " development is a process of improving the well-being of the people. It is about raising the standards of living of people, improving their education and health, and also opening out to them new and equal opportunities for a richer and more valid life."

As stated above development takes different dimensions so no single dimension should be discussed separately they all move together as one. Economic, social, political and administrative all these components came into play when development is seen to have taken place. I will briefly elaborate on the four dimensions of development.

1. Economic development – this is an essentially important component of development according to Sapru. R. K. He says by raising national income, reducing poverty and more equitable distribution of wealth and income are all essential components of economic development. According to

Kindleberger, “ economic growth means more output, and changes in the technical and institutional arrangements by which it is produced. ”

2. Social development – is a broad concept, it may be seen as a process of ushering in a new order of existence. The quality of life and the quality of social relations which exist would indicate the level of the order of existence, according to Unnithan T. K. N. (1976).

3. Political development – may be defined as the capacity of a political system to deal with its own fundamental problems more effectively while responding to the changing political demands of the people. Gabriel A. (1963).

4. Administrative development – or development of administration is the first and the most important facets of administration. According to Sapru. R. K. “ the emerging problem in developing countries is how to combine skills and bring them to bear more effectively on action development programmes which will develop their economy, sustain improvement in the social system and increase the capacity of the political system. ”

This is the main aim of development Administration. ‘ Underdevelopment’ is an economic situation characterised by persistence low levels of living in conjunction with absolute poverty, low income per capita, low rates of economic growth, low consumption levels, poor health services, high death rates, high birth rates, dependency on foreign economies and limited freedom to choose among activities that satisfy human wants. Todaro. M. (2000). Most of the third world countries in Africa have the characteristics of

being underdeveloped. The causes of underdevelopment are diverse depending on the countries background of a country.

In most of the African nations the causes are similar. We first look at the history background of these nations, almost the whole of Africa was colonised by the European countries. This in itself was the genesis of underdevelopment through colonialism. During the colonial era resources were transferred from the colonised country to the country of the colonial master. In Zambia the main source was copper which was mined and taken to Britain where it was sold. There was little return after the sales in Europe for development in Zambia itself. Other reasons can be classified as follows;

(a) Rapid population growth – most of the developing countries in Africa have rapid population growth at an annual rate of between 2 – 3% which exacerbates poverty, unemployment, malnutrition and other social problems. In most African countries the large population lives in the rural poor areas. According to Todaro, the rural areas are poor and tend to suffer from missing markets, limited information, and social stratification. As a result of these most people migrate into urban areas fueling urbanization which has its own problems.

(b) Most of the developing countries are less endowed with natural resources in comparison to the growing needs of their population. These nations have lower levels of industrialization and manufacturing exports. They often export raw materials to developed nations who produce finished goods which in return sold back to the LDCs in Africa at much higher prices.

(c) Developing African nations have an export base consisting of primary infrastructures and commodities with fluctuating prices and inelastic demand. They strive to cut down their foreign exchange requirements by resorting to import substitution strategies which often result in misallocation of resources.

(d) These countries also face the question of legitimacy which interferes with effective formulation and implementation of their national policies. According to Sapru, R. K. “ There is also general lack of skilled personnel and administrative staff for administering development programmes and projects. Lack of skilled manpower in most African countries is a direct result of the following; the brain drain, lack of human resource development planning including inadequacies in educational systems, improper recruitment and training policies. ”

(e) The problems of external debts, unfavorable trading environment (aggressive terms of trade imposed by developed countries), and adoption of costly imported technology continue to depress the prospects for development. In order to meet the balance of payments the African countries continue to borrow money from institutions like the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The conditions attached to these loans are so cruel that these poor nations are unable to repay the debts in time and probably make profit out of it. The good example is the money borrowed from China to purchase mobile clinics in Zambia. It will take many years to repay the debt, by the time the debt will be repaid all the equipment would be absolute. This means that

whatever surplus money earned would be used to service such debts other than being used to develop other sectors.

The dependency syndrome also plays a greater part as to why African nations are underdeveloped. As stated above already, markets tend to favour the industrialized countries which receive raw materials cheaply from the developing world. In addition, industrialized countries own the technology that developing countries needed and have the economic power to admit exports from developing countries only when it suited them. Investments by Western multinational corporations mainly harm developing countries and so such investment is suspicious.

Since free markets alone cannot generate adequate growth and structural change, governments have a major hand in planning and promoting the economy, including public sector enterprises to undertake the investments that the market would not provide. Foreign aid is also a “ neocolonial” instrument to preserve the dominance of the industrial countries and make the world safe for capitalism. I will give a brief example of the Zambian case of economic development since 1991 after the fall of Kaunda’s government which was more oriented on humanism ideology. The ideology is closely related to socialism.

In 1991 multiparty democracy was accepted as democratic elections were held and the Movement for Multiparty Democracy won the elections. Fredrick Jacob Chiluba President then, adhered to the conditions of the World Bank and IMF. This country headed for capitalist type of economy where privatisation was encouraged. This meant free enterprises, free market

systems, profit maximisation, and democratisation. Parasatal companies were privatised and the multinational foreign companies bought these companies. They brought in their skilled workers who are paid mega salaries, where as the unskilled jobs are left to the Zambians in some cases.

As if this is not enough they ask for years of experience when recruiting workers but where can Zambians get the experience if they are not given the skilled job positions. The so called investors are supposed to be a remedy to building of the economy but are now sucking more from the countries resources. They bank there monies in foreign banks depriving the local banks of the much needed foreign exchange which could be used for investments in Zambia in form of loans given to locals. The Chinese have even introduced their own banks now to serve their companies.

The multinational companies do not establish companies to produce finished goods in the country. For example timber, cotton, tobacco, copper and other resources are taken as raw materials. These are made into finished goods in their developed countries and sold to us thrice the price they were bought at. We are now buying Chinese clothes, radios, TV sets, e. t. c with materials from our own soils. Toddaro and Smith (2011) refer these middlemen as vouching for the products. They buy them at low prices and sell them at high prices in developed nations.

I will conclude by giving recommendations on how this issue of underdevelopment can be taken care of is by the use of Diffusion Approach of development. According to Everett M. Rodgers, and Edari R. S (1983) Diffusion is defined as the process by which an innovation is communicated



through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. They argue that there will be development in third world countries if the developed nations inject in capital, they adopt modern industrial production and adopt values, attitudes and behavior patterns that characterise western industrialised nations.

The African nations should break away from the links of capitalist metropolises; there must be challenges on international capitalism mainly by the working class removing domestic elite. They should also develop a policy of international solidarity among them in order to help each other to build an effectively dependent industrial base. The Southern Africa Development Corporation (SADC) is one example of a good start. It promotes trade among member states.