UNIT 5 ISSUES OF DEVELOPMENT

Structure

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Development, like all concepts has different meanings, understood and applied in various disciplines of social science variously. Given its ambivalence, if simplified, it denotes 'a rise in the standard of living of people'. Before we begin to address the development issues in Africa, a brief overview of the changing perceptions of development would be helpful.

5.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT

The study of development however is a recent phenomenon. The first United Nations Development Decade of the 1960s was characterised by optimism and international cooperation. This optimism was rather unrealistically based on the assumption that the development problems of the underdeveloped world would be solved quickly through the transfer of finance, technology and experience from the developed countries. This was the time when development became a synonym of economic growth. It was argued that it had been economic growth, which had helped developed countries to gain their advantaged positions.

However, with rising world poverty and inequality in the 1970s (the second UN Development Decade) such optimism faded. Many developing countries had achieved economic growth as measured by Gross National Product (GNP) but this 'development' was not shared equally amongst the populations of these nations. In the 1970s, the international commitment to sharing and cooperation also reduced tlie recession of the early 1976 and tlie realisation that underdevelopment, poverty, hunger and illiteracy will take a long time to vanish, made tlie developed countries do a rethink on their 'co-operation for development' programme.

During the third UN Development Decade of the 1980s, international cooperation re-emerged within the sphere of development. A better understanding of development patterns across the world emerged on the basis of the experience of the past two decades. This understanding was based on sound analysis of the underlying processes, which generated spatial patterns and alternative strategies. With the realisation that the development prospects of all parts of the world were interlinked, distributional issues such as improving the income, literacy, health levels of the populations were now accepted as fundamental parts of any development strategy. "Growth with Equity" or "Redistribution with Growth" are concepts, which emerged in the 1970s. They reinforced the belief that promoting economic growth is the fundamental criteria or development.

Development in the 1980s was seen to be a multi-dimensional concept encompassing widespread improvements in the social as well as material well-being of all in a society. It was also recognised that there was no single model for achieving development and investments in all sectors was equally important. Above all, development needed to be sustainable. It needed to include not only economic and social activities, but also those related to population, the use of natural resources and their impact on the environment. It was also during the late 1980s that human development took centre-stage in the development discourse. Interdependency of all development aspects was an established fact by the early 1990s.

5.3 THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In 1984, the United Nations commissioned an independent group of twenty-two people from member slates, drawn from both the developed and the developing world to identify long-term environment and development strategies for the world. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), also known as the Brudtland Commission, drafted a blue print for a "common endeavour and for new norms of behaviour at all levels and in the interest of all". Global cooperation and mutually supportive actions between countries at different stages of economic development were central themes their report entitled Our *Common Future* (WCED 1987). The Commission reported widespread natural resource degradation, but it displayed optimism that, given the global commitment and coordination, a more prosperous, just and secure future was possible for mankind.

The Brudtland Commission defined sustainable development as "development, which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The core issues and necessary conditions for sustainable development as identified by the WCED in accordance with the definition of sustainable developnient can be summarised as:

Core Issues:

- Population and Development
- Food Security
- Environment
- Energy
- Industry
- The Urban Challenge

Pursuit of sustainable development requires:

A political systetn that secures effective citizen participation in decision-making.

An economic system that provides for solutions for the tensions arising from disharmonious development.

A production system that respects the obligations to preserve the ecological base for development.

A technological system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance.

An administrative system that has tlie capacity for selfcorrection

5.4 DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

The period from the Second World War to the present in Africa has been dominated by the struggle to cope with economic crises, political disorder, civil wars, starvation, environmental disaster, epidemic diseases and misery. By whichever yardstick one measures, poverty and human suffering are intolerably extensive in Africa.The region suffers from poor infrastructure, limited technology, weak institutions and deficient health and educational services. The above portrayat of Africa no doubt highlights tlie harsh realities of the region, but like all perceptions it tends to exaggerate, distort and simplify. Not all parts of the continent are in such a dismal state as is brought out in ...writings on the region. Notable progress in some areas is seldom highlighted (e.g. Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda). It is, therefore, important to take a balanced and realistic view of the prospects of Africa in the coming years. Such a view must be based by a rational assessment of the past, of the changing global environment and an agenda for social and economic revival and progress be set out.

It cannot be denied that tlie atmosphere that pervades Africa is that of uncertainty and despair. Many states have literally collapsed and many more are on the verge of it in the near future. Yet the genocide in Somalia, Rwanda and Liberia not to mention socio-political unrest in Nigeria, Congo, and Sudan are only a few of the many theatres of war and human decimation in Africa. This scenario calls for an enduring and workable solution to the African crises, which is a crisis of development.

We have already gone through the meaning and a brief history of development and the concept of sustainable development. It can bc easily said that there are some common indices and this includes the fact that at the national or state level development usually denotes "a rise in the standard of living of a people". This rise has to be in various but complimentary forms. On the political level it would entail popular participation of the people in choosing their political destinies and public accountability of those in government. Economic development here would mean that people are able to satisfy their material needs adequately. On the social front development would imply, among other things, the respect for tlie views of others and respect of social norms in general.

Development so conceived should not be taken as a synonym for economic growth. While economic growth denotes increase in economic output usually measured in *per capita* income and not on how the benefits and liabilities of the society are distributed (it can be called quantitative growth), genuine development entails a qualitative increase or decrease in inequality among the people—less marginalisation among them arid more democratic political regimes etc. Development, therefore, according to Claude Ake is "people pursue objectives they have set for themselves, in their own interest and by means of their own resources".

5.5 HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Many factors, both internal and external, converge to determine, the present crises of development in Africa. External factors include slave trade with its dehumanising effects. Several million able-bodied and young people were dislocated from the continent, leaving the population severely depleted.

This effect continues to haunt Africa even today, because those who were taken away were the active labour force, which meant a massive loss to agriculture and all other sectors of the African economy. Secondly for tlie four centuries that the dehumanising "human hunt" lasted, it led to mutual distrust, violence and social disintegration. Therefore, with the population massively depleted, labour drained out, total breakdown of inter- and intra-national relationships, development literally came to a half even at the elementary stage. Colonisation followed immediately after slave trade and the "plundering" of Africa continued in adisguised but equally dislocating form. The economy of Africa was reorganised to suit the interest of the colonial powers. This economic dislocation took several forms. It led to the disorientation of agriculture because food crop production was deliberately neglected to promote production of cash crops like cocoa, coffee, groundnuts etc.

5.6 THE GREAT AFRICAN CRISIS

Starting in the late 1970s, increasing number of African countries began to experience stagnation and decline. Since the severe draughts in the Sahel and in the Horn of Africa in the early 1970s, Africa has been a continent in crises. The figures to validate the above statement speak for themselves. Africa alone accounts for 32 ofthk world's 47 least developed nations. This is evident from the infant and child mortality rates (1 000 children are killed daily in the continent by some arable diseases such a dysentery, cholera). They have been ravaged by problems of famines, wars, corrupt and repressive governments and by an AIDS pandemic. It is also instructive to note that by the end of the 20th Century Africa's 5 million refugees constituted one third of the world's total figure. These do not include the internally displaced in internal strife tom African stages of Uganda, Chad, Sudan, Mauritania and Burundi.

Added to the above problems is the mounting debt bill, which jumped to $72 billion in 1982. It rose to well above $300 billion by 2000. It is important to note here that this figure amounts to 102 per cent of Africa's GDP from 1962-2000. World Bank sources identified two main reasons for these problems. One is tlie excessive state control of the economy with inadequate administrative capacities (ignoring its own part in funding and encouraging such activities). The second is tlie explosive increase in the population over the last four decades, which is held responsible for desertification and environmental degradation and for inadequate food supplies and rising food imports. In 1974, Basil Davidson predicted, "by 1990 most Africans will be eating foreign food or will be scarcely eating at all". The statement has turned out to be prophetic today, as there is hardly any country in Africa, which has not had its sliare of food riots. It needs to be added here that a continent 'so (dis)-organised on the question of its food security will have to live by the world's charity as well as buy foreign food with the money that one could spend on development.

There is another dimension to the introduction of cash crops. The African economy is dependent on the West. It is because cash crops cannot be easily processed. For this reason African countries had to search for markets for their cash crops in Europe. With that the economy of Africa has remained tied to the whims of Western capitalism with all its inherent contradictions and injustice. The result is that Africa has not been able to develop beyond the stage dictated by the West.

5.7 STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMME AND DEVELOPMENT

A new dimension to the Western or Europe-dictated kind of development was added with the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP). first developed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) with the assumption that it is through greater involvement in the world economic system that countries can develop. Trade liberalisation has become an article of faith with IMF and World Bank, an approach which has emphasised the power of the market and ways in which even the humblest farmer is not only a part of the local economic system but of the network of international trade. Loans are given to develop and encourage "backward" and "forward" linkages in the economy. This could work well when economies are growing and there is an active 'market' but they are not strategies for economic growth in the poorest countries when prices for primary sector products are low or in regions of severe drought when there is little cash crop surplus.

One of the conditionalities of SAP is that the structurally adjusting country would have to devalue its currency. Through a chain of export promoted and import-"substituted" methods of production an increase in the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) was sought to be achieved. This would devalue the country's products and make it cheaper thereby increasing demands for them in foreign countries. The point, which needs to be emphasised here is that, the logic of SAP fails in the face of economic realities of Africa. After more than a decade of trade liberalisation policies because most African states have fledgling industries or no industry, which require capital abroad, currency devaluation pushed up the prices of the imported capital and services, consequently pushing up cost of production which, in turn, has been borne by the consumers who have to buy at exorbitant prices. The end result of devaluation is inflation, which further reduces the purchasing power of the people.

Similarly, the agricultural sector in most African countries is still rudimental-y. About 86 per cent of agricultural activities are carried out partially by traditional implements and are actually at the mercy of the usually inclement weather. That means that in spite of any increased demand, the farmer stands to gain nothing. Another important factor is the long gestation periods of most of the cash crops (cocoa and palm). This makes responding to increased demand almost impossible.

Adebayo Adedeji, a renowned African economist has rightly observed:

> Far from bringing about economic reform, these Structural Adjustment Programmes have severely eroded the developmental drive that has always been the best hope for stabilizing the precarious political structures that succeeded colonialism.

To sum up, one can say the Structural Adjustment Programmes have been associated with declining living standards of the people, for both rural and urban populations, blatant inequalities in incomes and intense competition for limited resources despite modest improvements in industrial capacity. Although liberalisation has but some barriers on corrupt practices, it has been accompanied by new methods of appropriating public resources For private use.

5.8 GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

Most governments in Africa have failed notoriously to provide basic security to their people from wars—civil and international, political instability and breakdowns of the rule of law. While independence was expected to bring about a qualitative change in peoples' lives, the leaders of the struggle for independence had different agendas. They quickly replaced Europeans in the power structure. Therefore, immediately after the end of the colonial rule the people became captive to their own leaders, who then marginalised and manipulated them for their own selfish ends. (Mobutu of former Zaire, Nnamdi Azi Kiwe of Nigeria, Banda of Malawir, Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, the list goes on). All this transformed Africa for the worse. African politics transferred into and has since remained "the struggle to control and exploit the officers of the State". The military was not left behind in this dismal race and many national governments moved to the barracks and decades of bloody military *coups* ensued. The pressure exerted by the Western powers encouraged domestic opposition, which was always very strong to organise active resistance to the military, one-party, one-group or one-persol1 regimes. Coupled with this, donor countries and international financial organisations began to dispense development assistance to the recipient country's record on human rights and progress towards democratic forms of governance. Despite significant progress made in African countries with political democratisation, there is great uncertainty about the nature and durability of new regimes, because multiparty politics is known lo encourage ethnic tensions and conflicts. It has also been extensively argued that a sizeable middle class, an independent media and intelligentsia and a basic industrial and commercial establishment help sustain democracy. Africa fails on these parameters.

The world political context changed in the 1970s and the 1980s. There was an upsurge in democracy worldwide. The process started with tlie transition from military to democratic regimes in Latin America followed by Asia (military or one-party regimes in South Korea, Taiwan, China Bangladesh, Pakistan, Cambodia etc.) Momentous changes took place in East and Central Europe and the Soviet Union with the collapse of communist regimes and their replacement by governments elected in multiparty competition. This global trend exerted pressure on Africa as well. The political situation in Africa also came under multiple sources of pressure. It suffices to note that the survival of the civil or military powers had taken precedence over every other issue of governance, including tlie question of development. There was hardly any development strategy in place. African governments were perceived by tlie people as "hostile forces to be evaded, cheated or thwarted as opportunity permits". This has led to unprecedented corruption and social cleavage. In tlie early 1980s only Botswana, Senegal, Mauritius and Zimbabwe practised democracy. In tlie last two decades a large number of nations have converted to multiparty politics such as Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola (Marxist-Leninist states), Ghana, Malawi, Kenya, Tanzania (dictatorships and civilian one-party regimes). One of the greatest events in African history was the end of *apartheid* in South Africa.

On tlie other hand there have been setbacks and reversals such as Sierra Lone, Nigeria and Congo. Sustained economic crisis was one of the main reasons for this democratic upsurge in Africa as in other parts of the developing world. The failure of tlie political systems prevalent in Africa to resolve problems of ethnic and religious conflicts, harsh repression and gross violation of human rights in addition to social and political pressure from Western countries and the end of the Cold War and sustained economic crises were the many reasons for establishment of democratic governments in Africa. There is no doubt that African countries are entering their democratic phase in most hostile economic circumstances.

5.9 GLOBALISATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Although the term globalisation is widely used yet there appears to be no agreement in terms of what this phenomenon represents. For tlie present discourse of Africa this process can be said to have two dimensions—one is that of as a powerful vehicle that raises economic growth, spreads technology and contributes to better living standards in both the developed and developing world. The otlier dimension is that it 'assaults' the sovereign authority of the nation states, local culture and tradition and even threatens economic and social stability. It is also significant to realise that the institutions that have emerged as a consequence of globalisation extend beyond the power and authority of nation stales. Non-governmental organisations (NGO's) environmental movements, trans (multi) national organisations, ethnicgroups and multi-regional organisations are important constituents of a globalised world. It is because of the two dimensional aspect of globalisation that both windows of opportunity and threats ofstagnation and disorder have equal chance of taking over. The outcome again rests on the interaction between domestic forces and external circumstances.

Although there has been gradual liberalisation of trade as democracy is slowly taking roots and some semblance of order is evident in the political and economic spheres of life in Africa, the goal of a completely integrated world economy is far from being realised. Encouraging signs in liberalisation of trade, greater mobility ofcapital, technology and skills not withstanding, the quality of national environment plays an important role in inflows ofcapital, technology and skills and in these aspects most countries in Africa are at a great disadvantage. Poor infrastructure and scarcity of managerial, technological and entrepreneurial skills are major obstacles to their emergence as significant centres ofproduction. Globalisation can accentuate the crises in countries suffering from political instability and economic mismanagement through facilitating flight of capital and skills. However, countries like Nigeria, Cameroon, Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa can derive major gains from economic liberalisation and integration.

Integration in a global economy cannot be based on primary product trade. Several other alternatives to primary products are the range of mineral wealth of Africa. Non-traditional agricultural products such as fruits, vegetables and flowers can provide some countries with a dynamic source of employment and foreign exchange earnings. Processing of agricultural and mineral products and a manufacturing sector based on them has a bright prospect for development.

There are some hopeful signs of political regeneration and economic arid social recovery. Governments in Africa have become more responsive to peoples voices arid a respect for difference ofopinion has re-emerged in countries which till very recently were under authoritarian regimes. There is a growing professional and middle class ofpeople, which had nearly become extinct in the 1970s and 1980s. This need to be accompanied by sustained improvement in living standards of the people. Some African countries recorded impressive progress in tlie 1960s and 1970s in education, improvement in health services, reducing infant mortality and malnutrition and increasing life expectancy. But these indicators of development registered a downward spiral in the 1980s.

Sub-Saharan Africa has higher adult literacy, lower child malnutrition and lesser gender disparities on most social indicators than South Asia. The occurrence of high fertility rates for most African countries in the last 25 years is a unique condition not found in other developing regions. The expected high population growth rates in tliecoming decades and their implications for economic growth, human development and environmental preservationare among the most difficult challenges facing Africa.

5.10 ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Africa is a large and diverse continent, which possesses an extremely varied topography, comprising most major ecological systems. These include the world's largest desert and semi-arid regions, longest rain forests, cool high lands, humid coastal areas, savannahs and most extensive riverine zones and marshes. The soils and rainfall are also highly variable. Extreme events such as flooding arid drought have been recorded for thousands of years. The equatorial belt receives high rainfall, whereas Northern and Southern countries and those in the I-lorn of Africa are arid or semi-arid. All parts of Africa, even those that usually have high rainfall experience climate variability (seasonal and annual variations in temperature and rainfall patterns within and between regions or countries). Most of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa as well as the Eastern Indian Ocean Islands are affected by the ENSO (El Nino Southern Oscillation) phenomenon. Rainfall records from the early 1900s and mid-1980s show that Africa's average rainfall has decreased since 1968 and has been fluctuating at a markedly low level. The last two decades show no sign of sustained recovery from the poor rains of the 70s and 80s, as a result in 1992-93 Southern Africa was confronted by a drought of unprecedented severity. Countries most affected by draught include Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritania and Mozambique.

History of Environmental Degradation in Africa

The establishment of colonial rule in the 19th and early 20th Century led to a series of developments with disastrous consequences for environmental equilibrium.

Large territories of grazing and croplands were acquired either for European settlements as in many Eastern and Southern African countries, or for plantations as in Central and West Africa. This was accompanied by demarcation of land as colonial territories of different European powers. This disrupted the long established systems of shifting cultivation and nomadic pastoralism. It also confined the indigenous population to areas of low agricultural productivity. People were forcefully employed as labourers in European fanns, plantations and mines. This established the migratory system with disastrous consequences. In many areas disruption of the African society, laid the foundation of environmental degradation. In addition to this state control over forests, mountains, water bodies, grazing and croplands led to growing deprivation and marginalisation of local communities. For example, in the 1930s the French took overall common land and established a forestry code. This process continued after independence from colonial rule. Though the formal responsibility of management of the commons lay with the state, it could not exercise effective control. This again had worst possible implications for resource conservation. The traditional resource management systems were destroyed and no alternative was put in its place.

The commercialisation of agriculture was an additional source of environmental stress. Some of the earlier practices of crop rotation, intercropping, mixed farming and shifting cultivation were either. abandoned or restricted. While tree crops such as tea, coffee, and cocoa have beneficial effects on soil conservation, cotton and groundnuts reduced soil fertility and increased soil erosion.

Development ***Policies*** *and Programmes*

As in most developing countries official policies both colonial and post- colonial have added to environmental degradation. Large-scale developmental projects financed by the World Bank have been designed and implemented without regard to their environmental and social impact, These include construction of dams as in Jabel el-Awliya in the White Nile Province of Sudan, creation of irrigation facilities Bura on the Tana River in Kenya and river basin development schemes in Ethiopia, large-scale resettlement schemes in Tanzania etc. Such projects have intensified resource degradation, population pressure on limited land, change in the level and direction of water flows.

Africa is most specifically associated with is its wildlife, especially the large mammals. It is estimated that 65 per cent has been lost through loss of habitat and poaching. Africa's wildlife resources are the basis of a thriving tourist trade, which provides economic incentives both for their preservation and exerts additional pressure on their habitats. This conflict has led to the initiation of new methods of wildlife management based on local participation. The wetlands of Lake Victoria, swamps of

Congo, and deltas of some of the major rivers are home to diverse range of plant and animal life including many endangered species.

The economic and environmental value of biodiversity cannot be understated which has the greatest concentration in the vast tropical rainforests of the Congo Basin. This region has one of the highest level of urbanisation in Africa and yet one of its lowest population densities. The main threats to the rainforest come from exploitation of timber and developtnent of its mineral potential.

5.11 TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Virtually every aspect of Africa's development is environment related. The heavy dependence of African countries on their natural resources calls for responsible utilisation and conservation as essential to tlie future development of these countries. This is what sustainable development is. Though reliable figures are difficult to obtain but on the basis of available figures it can be said that the econolnic growth of Africa is based on unsustainable development practices. The situation is especially serious at the rate at which precious renewable resources are being depleted.

The unsustainable development strategies are also harmful in the longer run in economic terms. The highly competitive international market does not price most of the commodities that constitute the bulk of Africa's trade. One of the most important challenges facing the international community in the period ahead is to make the transition to an economic system in which the environmental arid social costs of products, particularly renewable resources incorporated in their prices.

African nations still do not posses the capacity to value add to the processing and upgrading their products. This requires technological and marketing skills, which are scarce in Africa. In developing their renewable resources in an unsustainable manner, they are not only selling their "development future', they are selling it at a great loss. Again internalising the price of both natural and manufactured products can reverse this. This should in principle become a government policy. Unfortunately this can be called a faraway dream.

While subsidies can be a useful instrument in meeting certain policy objectives on a short-term basis, it is now obvious in most of the developing countries of Asia and Africa that they have had a perverse effect. A recent Study by the Earth Council indicates that most developing country governments spend several billion dollars per year in subsidies in four sectors of their economies — agriculture, transport, energy and water-subsidies which are highly unsustainable and benefit the high income minority of the population. Sometimes these subsidies are higher than the amount of Official Development Assistance (ODA) that Africa receives. Many infrastructure projects supported by ODA serve to undermine progress towards sustainability and lead to misuse of scarce resources. A recent study estimates that nearly one-third of the 150 billion dollars invested in roads in Africa has already been lost because of mismanagement and poor maintenance. This not only blocks economic development in the regions, which depend on roads, but also imposes an accumulating burden on future resources. The same study estimates that to restore only those roads that are economically viable would require an expenditure of 1.5 billion dollars annually for the next 10 years.

Sustainable development cannot be achieved merely by assigning responsibility to governments; it also requires a total commitment of governments to sustainable development for which the 'Agenda 21' of Rio Summit provides a valuable set of guidelines. Governments cannot do it in isolation. Fortunately, in a globalised world they do not have to. People are already ahead of their governments.

In African countries, as in tlie rest of tlie world, there has been a phenomenal growth of non-governmental organisations and civil Society groups with a commitment to various aspects of sustainable development at both policy and implementation levels. The sustainable development practice is not foreign to Africa. It is inherent in the traditional cultures and commercial practices that have enabled African Societies to survive and thrive through the centuries.

Surely it is clear that with the current trends in development, Africa will not be able to meet the needs and aspirations ofpeople. Sustainable development is no more an option it is a necessity, the more it is delayed more costly and difficult it will become to achieve.

5.12 SUMMARY

In this unit we try and understand the meaning of development especially in the context of Africa. While development is defined as a rise in the standard of living of a people, it is now widely accepted that development has to be sustainable.Development can be at various levels be it political, economic or social. The present crises of development in Africa can be traced back to the slave trade of 1445, which had a direct impact on the active labour force of the continent and was a loss for the African economy. Colonisation meant that plundering of Africa continued. The stagnation, decline and severe droughts in early 1970s made matters worse. Added to that was the mounting debr burden and the introduction of cash crops which made Africa dependent on the West. This led to the introduction of structural adjustment policies dictated by the West. This in turn led to devaluing of currency, inflation, seduction in purchasing power, inequality of incomes and declining standards of living. The process of globalisation has not helped Africa though some countries like Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa can derive major gains from economic liberalisation but poverty and hunger persist. Also, policies both colonial and post-colonial have added to environmental degradation. What is important is to make a transition to an economic system in which the environmental and social costs of products are incorporated in theirprices.

5.13 EXERCISES

1) What do you understand by the term 'development'? Relate the concept of development to African experience.

2) Describe briefly the major problems ofdevelopment in Africa since 1950s.

3) What has been tlie impact of globalisation on Africa's economic development?

4) What are the prospects of sustainable development in Africa?