

AN APPRAISAL OF THE AFRICAN CRISIS OF DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

In the debate of Africa's development crisis stands one indisputable reality that the continent still remains highly underdeveloped after many years of her development strides and even the wake of globalization. Obviously, from whatever angle one may wish to consider the Africa predicament, either strictly from socio-economic perspective that focuses on economic variables particularly, income growth that confuses growth with development or from 'physical quality of life index' of (Morris) or the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) Africa is still remains backward. Even, if we look at it from Human Development Index (HDI), broadened to encompass socio-economic indicators, the data still points to the same underdevelopment situation of Africa. However, the simple reason for this is that consistently, the Gross National Product (GNP) and Per Capita Income levels in virtually all African Countries have remained below the conventional standard. The exhibition of the Africa's situation range from low socio-economic indices, high inflation rate, increasing debt burden, high rate of infant mortality and high numbers of out of school children, to lack of good social amenities, low life expectancy at birth, high rate of unemployment, extreme poverty and social insecurity. It is therefore in view of this that paper attempts to critically appraise the African development crisis, causes and some possible solutions. To achieve these, this paper employs analytical method because of the complexity of the topic.

Keywords: Appraisal, Africa, Development, Crisis, Solutions.

Introduction

Archaeological facts have it that Africa is the cradle of humanity, development and civilization (Onyewuenyi 75). This is an indication that Africa was an important happening in the history of man. Therefore, the so called primitive African people of old, middle and new stone ages made a tremendous advancement in the area of technological revolution by evolving some implements particularly, stone tools. Thus, Africa was surely not left behind

in the development process of the world in those epochs. In fact, many African tribes prior to the time of colonial invasion had well developed political, economic and social arrangements in the form of monarchies, democracies, emirates and theocracies (95). But, with the recent culture of over- dependency on foreign aids and policies, Africa can hardly point to any meaningful amount of socio-economic and technological development within the realm of modern and contemporary global development arrangements.

Hence, arising from Africa's crisis of development is the indisputable reality that the continent still remains highly underdeveloped after many decades of her development strides. Obviously, from whatever angle one may wish to argue, either from the strict socio-economic perspective that narrowly focuses on economic variables particularly income growth that confuses growth with development or from 'physical quality of life index' of (Morris) or the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) Africa is still remains backward. Even if we look at it from Human Development Index (HDI), broadened to encompass socio-economic indicators, the data still points to the same underdevelopment situation of Africa. However, the simple reason for this is that, often times, the Gross National Product (GNP) and Per Capita Income levels in virtually all African Countries have consistently remain below the conventional accepted standard. In fact, the indicators of the Africa's development predicament has been low socio-economic indices, high rate of infant mortality and out of school children, lack of clean portable water, low life expectancy at birth, high rate of unemployment, extreme poverty and insecurity. This situation has propels some significant questions as to what socio- economic policies should Africa adopt in her quest for development? Or, whether Africa should continue to employ the western developmental paradigms even when it seems they are not working in her situation? These fundamental questions became obvious because, many African inhabitants today are still wallowing in abject poverty, squalid and squatter settlements, ignorance, social insecurity, conflicts and wars, diseases and servitude even in the wake of globalization. Although one may argue that this is partly due to poor Leadership and corruption as Obadina rightly asserts that, in recent times, many African countries have consistently carried the world cup as the most corrupt nations of the world (Obadina 42). Consequent upon this;

---African countries are not only politically unstable, debt ridden, aid-dependent but also technologically and economically backward. The individual country's capacity to function effectively and efficiently is becoming increasingly compromised. Particularly since late 1970s, the social and economic conditions of Africa have been widely rated as the most deplorable in the world (Ikenga 30).

Given the above analyses, can one then argue that Africa's contact with the west was what brought about these tales of despairs in Africa? Or should it be said that the contempt with which Africans were treated by the colonialists brought about Africa's lag in terms of science and technological, which are the indices of development? Though, we must not easily forget that material wealth and acquisition themselves are not only indicators and indices of progress or development; development is the ability to cater for essential needs (Sarpong ix), but Africa is still lagging behind in this regard.

However, while some attribute Africa's predicaments to the historical antecedent of colonialism, slavery, imperial regime of Western domination and neo-colonialism, some blame African leaders for their mismanagement, incompetence insensitivity and corrupt tendencies. Yet, others shifted attention from blames in order to provide remedies to the Africa's development challenges. Therefore, it is in view of the conspicuous existential reality of Africa's development catastrophe that this paper focuses on analysing the dimension of the crisis, causes, effects and some core values in rectifying the problem.

Conceptual Definitions

Development like other social concepts has no generally acceptable definition. It has been conceived, defined and explained in diverse ways by philosophers, economists and social theorists using varying indices. Thus, understanding the meaning and nature of development has remained a perennial issue for man just as it is to determine whether given societies are developed, developing, or not probably going to develop. Therefore, for scholars like W. Arthur, Fei John, and Constur Ravis, a developed human society is one which the Gross National Product (G N P) or Per Capital Income experience sustained growth (Iyoha 1). In this wise, they conceive development purely as an economic phenomenon. That is, an increase in the Gross National Product of a country. This is the classical notion of development has recently been the basis of any developmental discourse in the world over.

Furthermore, from the modernists' point of view, the term development implies expansion of infrastructure or general project of industrialization that brings about access to such facilities as; good roads, good health care, portable water supply and good education etc. (Christo 21). Going by this definition, development is believed to be identical with availability of basic human facilities. John Robinson again defines development as an economic modernization which is the expansion of control over nature through interaction among men (Robinson 21). Contrarily, Ake describes development as the process of a social transformation in which the people themselves are in charge of the process (Efemini 1). As such, for Ake, economic growth, increase in per capital income and industrialization are not alone the indicators of development. Corroborating Ake's assertion, Wiredu viewed development purely from humanistic dimension when he said that development should not be perceived absolutely in the material sense but also in the immaterial wise, which emphasizes the human aspect of development. Therefore, from the material perspective, development involves the control and exploitation of the physical environmental resources through the application of the result of science and technology. Also on moral level, it involves the regulation and improvement of human relationship through the promotion of human values such as; freedom, justice, equality and mutual cooperation. Hence, he is of the view that a well-rounded development is one in which material advancement and social or moral values are mutually reinforcing"quoted in (Oladipo 121). In view of this, it can be deduced that, development comprises both the empirical and abstract human elements.

Furthermore, for Dudley, development is the emancipation process affecting the society at the level of the masses from both socio-political and economic terrains. This is why Dudley Seer's conception of development encompasses social justice, reduction of inequality and eradication of poverty in human society (Dudley 1). Following from Dudley's conception, it can be said again that development is the eradication of social ills such as; poverty, oppression,

unemployment and eradication of inequality which are vital indices for measuring the level of development in any human society. This further explains why Dudley opines that; the state of development can be assessed or measured by the questions such as; what has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? How is justice applied? (Dudley 1).

Walter Rodney in his book, "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa" construed development in human society in multifaceted dimensions. Thus, at the individual level for him, it connotes increased skills and capacities, greater freedom, creativity, self discipline, responsibility and material well being. But at that of social group, it implies an increased capacity to regulate both internal and external relationship, because much of human history has been clouded with survival against national hazards, and against real imagined human enemies (Rodney 5). As such, his conception of development from the angle of freedom and independence influences his position that, there is development if and only if people are free to pursue the objectives they have set by themselves, for their own interest and by means of their resources (5).

Supporting this, Ake argues, development is not a project but a process by which people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their own choice and values (Ake 125). Thus, development is a process because it cannot be executed above the people but rather it is a process that is peoples oriented. This therefore implies that development is not tied to any culture or race but unique to every human society. It also negates Knipper's position which sees culture as the determinant factor for development...(Knipper 28). In a nutshell, "no society is static and permanently unchanging; nevertheless, some changes are more important than others. The most vital is a complex set of changes occurring primarily in the fundamental ideology of a society which prevailed in Europe in the 16th-19th centuries" (Roxborough 1). From the above conceptions of development, it is evident that development is also a process of transformation of people and their society. Therefore central to the nature of development are:

- a). That development is about improvement of the living conditions of the people and the society.
- b). It is people's centred because it cannot be implemented without the people
- c). It is a gradual process of improvement and transformation
- d). It is not culturally based because every society, culture or race has the capacity to develop at its own pace.

Summarily, from all descriptions, it is apparent that development is a significant factor in every given society. Though, its conception and understanding differs from society to society. Meaning that, each society has ways of developing itself by passing through the necessary developmental phases. However, success of these stages is a function of many key factors such as the environment, interaction with other societies within and outside, leadership and its style, management, culture, individual and collective goals of the people and of the community and the people themselves (Kolawole T Adeigbe Y. et.al, 1)

The African Crisis of Development

After the colonial regime, Africa has been preoccupied with the quest for development but this has yielded meagre or no result because in Africa, economic growth and living conditions have been retrogressing. Although, According to Efemini,

“In most African countries, real incomes are higher than they were some years ago, yet health prospects are poorer, hunger is pervasive and infrastructure is breaking down just as other some social institutions. However, many factors have been adduced to be responsible for this apparent failure of the development process in Africa; the colonial legacy, social pluralism and its centrifugal tendencies, the corruption of leaders, poor labour discipline, the lack of entrepreneurial skills, poor planning and incompetent management, inappropriate policies, the stifling of market mechanisms, low levels of technical assistance, the limited inflow of foreign capital, falling commodity prices and unfavourable terms of trade, and low levels of saving and investment” (Efemini 1).

The above stated factors have conspired to constitute serious impediments to Africa's development strides particularly, in Nigeria. The Upshot of this is that, development grounded in traditional African ethos, generated within the ambiance of traditional African ideals, becomes a mirage. This is why lately, there seems to be consensus agreement among contemporary African philosophers that the major predicament of Africa in the wake of globalization is how to promulgate a development model that is African in nature and content. Apparently, the western models of developments that were adopted in most African nations have yielded little or no convincing results because the continent is still regarded as home to the largest poverty ridden people.

Therefore, the questions now are: How did Africa fall into this tale of development crisis? Which way forward? These fundamental questions gave rise to plethora of theories and counter theories in an attempt to proffer answers and solutions. In view of this, some have made attempt to trace the development problem of Africa to the inhuman colonial experience, slave trade and foreign influence on African economic and political policies. This was (Ake 49), argued that “colonialism and slave trade drew African continent backward by condemning the traditional African values and her socio-political economic structure. As a result, Africa today seems to be enveloped in a palpable loss of hope for the future as she consistently depends on western socio-economic and political models for her development. Consequent upon this, Africa remains consistently the home to least developed countries in the world.” Robert Mugabe succinctly affirms this fact when he remarks that:

“Africa is now the home to the world's largest number of least developed countries. The continent further boasts of the largest refugee population in the world. Furthermore, it is thwarted with endless conflict, civil strife and gross human right abuse. Whereas standard of living in other continents have risen over time, in Africa, present standards of living are no better than they were two decades ago. High unemployment, inflation, civil strife, poverty, refugee crisis, desertification, diseases, malnutrition and most of all ignorance, the list

is endless- appear to be the only legacy the continent is capable of passing on from one generation to another" (Mugabe, 85).

Reflecting on the current extreme poverty, high rates of unemployment and insecurity in most African countries, and more importantly now that out of the several indebted and low per-capita income countries of the world over, many are African countries, one would see that Mugabe's assertion was apt. Particularly, now that countries like, Sudan, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania and a host of others have been tagged highly indebted low income countries, which redirect up to 40 per cent of their export earnings to servicing of external debt (Olofin A, 13). On the average, more than 30percent of government revenue in Sub-Sahara Africa goes to debt servicing instead of stimulating social development and productive base of these countries. For example, the debt profile of Nigeria as at today even after the celebrated debt cancellation of 1999 has tremendously increase under the current administration and this for me is still anti-development. Currently, Nigeria debt keeps rising as a result of the systematic adoption of western economic and social policies like naira devaluation without critical evaluation of its effect on the economy and people's living conditions. It is also due partly poor economic planning or policies as well as chronic corruption in the system. This situation for me has added to the disadvantage social development and slow economic growth in Nigeria and in Africa at large. Nevertheless, some other factors have been attributed to be the root causes of the Africa's development crisis and these includes among other things;

Leadership Failure

Africa is a continent blessed with abundant human and natural resources, very rich in both cultural and ancestral heritage but is still struggling with the problem of unstable political structure and leadership failure. Though, most African nations have gained political freedom from colonial rules, Africa as a continent has not succeeded in raising good and effective leaders. This implies that African leaders in most cases have not been able to rise to the challenge of setting personal example in terms of openness, transparency, accountability, selflessness and honesty, all of which are the hallmarks of genuine and good leadership. Obviously, this has adversely slowed down development and growth of Africa, due to high rate of corrupt tendencies, maladministration and incompetent of successive leaders that have emerged in various parts of Africa. Often times, these leaders are brought on board by inauspicious and corrupt democratic process. In view of this, it has been argued severally that the problem of leadership in Africa is also that of political corruption both in high and low places.

As such, it is therefore worth stating that the leadership failure in most African countries cannot be isolated from the fact that most of the political processes or platforms that brought many African leaders on board are fraudulent and undemocratic because they lack democratic ideals, programmes and manifestos. Often times, in Africa, politics is seeing as avenues for self enrichment or a white collar platform. For example, political parties in Nigeria have become a venture for money making such that political manifestos and programmes are now mere fulfilment of formalities. No wonder Uwalaka insists that the present disappointment and disillusionment in the African continent and political disarray are questions which African conditions pose to philosophers (Uwalaka 4). This is why discourse

about African socio- economic development crisis today is often viewed in connection with leadership problem of Africa.

Similarly, Osudibia pointed out that the conversations that dominate the discourse in Africa today are leadership failure, and the problem of unending corrupt practices created by leaders of Africa... (Osudibia 94). This is so because, many Africa leaders have exhibited high level of incompetence and this has been an essential part of what persistently plunged the continent into the abysmal dungeon of underdevelopment. Seemingly, leaders in African are not motivated by service to the people but by sheer greed for money and wealth and so, they shelved their duties to the public for self enrichment, defile the role of authority, and degraded themselves as not much more than white- collar criminals (Lee. 1). They care less about the welfare of the citizenry, the overall development and common good of the society. Hence, with the current situation of thing in most African countries, it will not be fallacious to unequivocally adduce that, "the legacies left behind by most African dictators or leaders have been trail of their monstrous crimes against humanity rather than developmental projects" (Odey 10).

Social Insecurity

Lately, there have been serious insecurity in many African countries, ranging from ethnic conflicts, tribal clashes, political wars, religious militias, and armed banditries, insurgencies to political killings, and kidnappings; all as a result of youths restfulness arising from the high rates of unemployment and poor governance. For example, there have been serious incidences of social unrest that have consumed many human lives and destructions of properties in places like; Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Mali, Niger, Chad Tunisia and particularly in Nigeria, where Boko Haram and armed banditries have almost taken over the countries. In fact, by their inhuman activities, many lives have been lost, properties destroyed to such level that there is no more security for both Nigerians and foreign investors. This deteriorating security situation has indeed paralyzed many businesses and industrial activities in many African countries, because investors now refuse to come, while those on ground are now relocating. In a nutshell, many African countries have been declared as business risk zone by the international world and no one wants to invest in a country where there is so much risk, dangers, insecurity of life and property. Consequently, this has been a major threat to the development process in Africa simply because, where there is no peace, security of life and property, which are the prerequisites for economic growth and development, there can be no progress or development of any kinds.

Furthermore, taking a critical reflection on the current situation of things in many African nations, one begins to wonder if Africa can ever develop with the degenerated level of security and trust which often breeds violent conflict. Because, it is widely accepted that violent conflict a major hindrance to development anywhere in the world. It inflicts human suffering through death, destruction of livelihood, constant displacement and poverty. Violence disrupts the process of production, creates condition for pillage of the countries' resources and diverts their application for development purposes to servicing war. A violence conflict is thus responsible for perpetual misery and underdevelopment in the content (Thelma Awori, vii).

Thus, as long as insecurity of life and property continues to thrive in Africa and Nigeria in particularly, development will become more difficult to achieve. I maintain this because; conflicts arising from insecurity have the tendency to severely obstruct development process by destroying its infrastructural base, interrupting the production process and shifting away attention and resources from productive ventures. Above all, it diminishes the capacity of the government to provide common good such as; employments, shelters, good health care services and other social amenities

Corruption

In many African Countries, corruption has become endemic in such a way that one would think it is now a way of life in Africa. In fact, Oguejiofor caps it up that:

Corruption is of course a worldwide phenomenon and recent discourses,...It seems however, that it thrives more where it is tolerated, and where the possibility of detection and consequent punishment is slim (Osudibia 94) .

This is the replica of the situation in Africa and Nigeria in particular, where corruption has become so endemic that even common man expects his kinsman in political position to use his office to accumulate wealth by all means. This attitude explains why monies meant for developmental projects are often being diverted into personal accounts by some of our leaders. For instance, in recent past, director in Nigeria diverted two billion pension funds into his personal account and no severe punishment assigned. More so, prominent among the incidents of gross impunity and corruption in Nigeria is the lingering issues of oil subsidy scam in which trillions of naira that could have been use for development have been siphoned by some individuals. In fact, it has been consuming the larger parts of the annual budget that could have been spent on social and infrastructural development to improve the people's living conditions since 1999. Therefore, critical reflections on the high level of corruption particularly in Nigeria and Africa at large, seems it has been institutionalised.

As earlier mentioned, this accounts for why many times countries in Africa have been tagged the most corrupt nations of the world by international estimation. Obviously, this is a reality that stares one in the face because; it has engulfed all our institutions and systems. Though, some might argue that corruption is not peculiar to Africa, yes, but it thrives in Africa where the detection and possible punishment stands slim or almost not. This is why monies meant for developmental projects are either misappropriated or diverted by some few individuals, contracts are awarded without due process; some poorly executed as a result of lack proper monitoring and accountability. In fact, the Nigerian example typifies the overall situation of the endemic culture of corruption, dishonesty and impunity in many African nations. This is why development becomes persistently problematic in Africa. Instead, the opposites such as; hunger, poverty, disease, strife, unemployment, insecurity, and underdevelopment have taken over.

Lack of Continuity and poor Implementation of Policies

Often times in most African democratic nations, new governments abandon projects, programmes, policies and plans they inherited from their predecessors for new ones just for person aggrandizement. These projects, policies or programmes which if completed can bring

about development; growth and improved standard of living for the people become abandoned projects. However, funds expended on such projects and programmes are wasted. And, in a situation where the new government even agrees to complete such inherited projects, another budget is prepared again, while the old money will probably not reflect documents or at all it will, it can reflect that such projects have been fully executed. Even if any inconsistency is detected in the future, the new government keeps mute because, in most instances the new government is always the brain child of the old and so, solidarity is always maintained.

However, if this situation continues, how then can Africa attain the development at the same pace with the West where things are done in the ideal ways? Quite frankly, development will always be a mirage in Africa as long as culture of solidarity in evil and discontinuity continues to thrive in governance system. For instances, this has been the peculiar operational system in Nigeria. During Sagari's regime, there was Green Revolution, it was abandoned for Operation Feed Nation of Obasanjo; this was later abandoned for Structural Adjustment Programmes of Babangida. Thus, all these did not just die without consuming huge amount of money from the nation's purse. How can a nation with this systemic failure and discontinuity syndrome forge ahead in terms of development? Nevertheless, this is not to conclude that these programmes and policies are completely unsuitable for development but they all failed due to poor implementation, misapplication and lack continuity in government.

Overdependence on Foreign Aids

Analyses have shown in the introductory parts of the study that the colonialists left behind chronic sense of dependence in Africa especially in the areas of economic and political ideologies as well as technological no how, which are the hallmarks of every development. I mean to say though, most African nations have gained their freedom from colonial regime but they still remain perpetually under the dictate of economic models of the west all in the name of globalization. This situation makes it difficult for Africa to development on its own without soliciting for external aids because colonial agenda has hindered development in Africa infusing dependency model and inferiority complex. Consequent upon this, the socio-political economy spheres of many African nations have been under the control and supervision of international bodies like; World Bank, IMF, Parish Club, and G8 Countries. In the assessments of these international bodies and their operators, for Africa to develop, it must adopt the Western paradigm of development. And in their philosophy, they hold that every society is at one stage confronted with crisis of backwardness or development. Therefore, just as Europe, America and other developed nations have had similar experience, but overcome with the instrumentality of capitalism; developing nations must adhere to these basic factors if they must develop. Consequently, because of the inability of African leaders to design solutions to our domestic problems Africa perpetually continue to source foreign aids that often come in form neo-colonialism, hence, the major problem associated with the over reliance on external aids for African development is that it does not encourage self-reliance. According to Nkrumah:

...it has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside. It

created a capitalist system of production that is characterised by private ownership of the means of production, profit maximization ...(Nkrumah 316)

Though, many economic analysts have argued that developing nations need foreign investment and assistance to boost their development further but, to my mind it has done more serious damage to our economies because it often leads to “lop-sidedness” and thus infused a parasitic culture in Africa. Therefore, if this process absolute reliance on external forces for our development in Africa is not minimized, Africa will remain perpetually under the dictate of foreign and multinationals hegemony. I mean, as long as Africa continues to rely on foreign aids for her development strategy without promoting self-reliance culture, the least effective her development efforts will be. This is obvious because, most of the economic and political strategies offered as a panacea to development in Africa do not contribute to her growth but technically always respond to the Western agendas. Henceforth, the development of Africa is not knotted to the patronization of western ideas, economic and political strategies or aids. Just as President Obama rightly admonished that “Africa’s future is up to Africans” it therefore beholds on African and Nigerian leaders in particular to shake up the dependency mentality and begin to cultivate the culture of self-reliance rather than self-denial (Obama 23) It implies that the urgent need for charismatic leaders with vision and transformatory mind-set now becomes an imperative for Africa. These transformatory leaders must be those who have intellectual capacity and initiative for change. Or better still, such individuals that are endowed with political wisdom, knowledge, and the intellectual capability to consolidate the democratic ideals, revive the educational sector and synergize the western and African world views. This again is where the critical roles of philosophy and philosophers as well become pivotal in the development process of African continent.

Conclusion

Accepted that colonialism and slavery have plunged Africa into the present state of political and economic backwardness but, we must not continue to point accusing fingers to the horrible colonial experiences for Africa’s present predicament after many years of freedom and self-governance. Rather, Africans should forge a way forward out of these nagging situations and think on how best to attain meaningful development that is lagging in the entire continent.

This again implies that African leaders must be ready to work assiduously to combat corruption and purge themselves of self-centeredness. This is a price which every African must be ready to pay just as Paul Kennedy rightly suggests that; a society which desires to be better prepared for the twenty- first century will pay a price to achieve that transition; it will need to re-tool its national vested interest, and alter many habits and perhaps amend its governmental structures (Kennedy 334).

This is a clarion call on African leaders, elites, professionals, intellectuals to wake up from their slumber and face the challenges of evolving an African socio-political economic policies and plans that will foster development in African context. This will propel the continent to part of self-reliance more than just accepting western ideologies imposed in the name of globalization. This means that the culture of self-reliance must be promoted by providing the

enabling environment for local businesses to growth in order to minimize over dependence of external or foreign aids for our development.

Above all, Africans, both leaders and followers must begin to appreciate some of the traditional values or ethos useful for development and growth in contemporary African society. In other words, African leader, technocrats, economists and policies makers must give more attention to making effective and workable economic policies that will be productive in order for growth, and development. To achieve this, corruption and all other vices must be discouraged by dishing out severe punishment to corrupt office holders in the public offices. This will in turn pave way for productive leadership and as well promote political stability, accountability, transparency and selfless leadership.

Finally, African leaders, educationists, philosophers and academia must give priority to those educational policies that promote and enhance character formation and morals. This will serve as a means to curbing the current crisis of leadership recklessness and failure that have beclouded entire African governance systems. In view of this, I will like to suggest that education should be made free and compulsory for all because it is often said that education is the bed rock of every development.

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