

JANES FORUM

Development and Field Science

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The term “development” is probably one of the most frequently used word in describing economic and social changes in Africa during the last 50 years. Although it has been used in various manners and occasions depending on what subject is being discussed, we may assume that it is a process through which a bundle of means make today's life of people better than yesterday's and tomorrow's life will be made better than today's. Since “better” is relative to a bench mark, development thus defined calls for objective understanding and analysis of the bench mark (or marks) in order that we can formulate a variety of measures to make it (them) better. We define the term “field science” in this paper to mean an objective study of the bench mark in order for us to formulate such measures. Thus defined, it embraces many disciplines of humanities, social science and a part of natural science, which are all related to development issues defined above. Unlike pure natural science in which a bench mark can generally be set up through a framework of scientific logics and experimentations, in field science the researchers themselves are unable to set up the bench mark but rather the bench mark is a set of historically given conditions.

The focus of development has been explicitly marked by a variety of catch-phrases in the last 50 years. Take an issue of overcoming poverty, for example. The catastrophic famine in

India in the late 1940s alarmed the world and “Freedom from Hunger” was adopted in the 1950s. Its main thrust was to increase agricultural productivity to reduce shortages of foods. The Green Revolution in the early 1960s gave a hope in eradicating the hunger in Asia. However, it resulted in unexpected effects of increased landless farmers, thus having seriously aggravated income gaps in the rural community. A series of violent social unrests took place in India, and the “Green Revolution” was about to become “Red Revolution.” On the other hand, the excess reliance on underground water for irrigation damaged soil fertility by increased salinity; when the surface of the soil turned to gray by salinity, the people began to worry about “Gray Revolution.”

From the mid-1960s, emphasis was given to “Rural Development” and the World Bank during the presidency of Robert S. McNamara (1968-81) actively promoted many rural development projects in which the focus of agricultural development was shifted to smallholder farmers and to increase these farmers' productivity, output, and incomes. Many projects had “an area development” focus and were undertaken in areas that suffered extreme poverty (World bank, 1990:131).

Meanwhile, massive rural-urban migration has continued to take place and the problems of the urban poor reached to a critical point. In the

1970s, thus, the “Basic Human Needs (BHN) Fulfillment” became another focus on development. It aims at alleviating the suffering of the rural and the urban poor from the shortages of foods, clothings, housing, educational and health services. Although the BHN approach has been strongly supported by donors, it meant a heavy financial burden on the governments in developing countries, resulting in an alarming degree of fiscal imbalances.

The post World War II boom of global economic growth came to end by the first Oil Shock in 1973/74 and the second oil shock in 1978/79 brought about deadly economic crisis in the non-oil developing countries. The economy of the poor African countries was shaken from its foundations. Macroeconomic imbalances – a twin deficits of government budgets and the balance of payments, and rampant inflation halted the economic growth of many African countries. The extent of the shock can be vividly explained by a case in Tanzania: From 1970 to 1984, “real income per household fell by roughly 50%. The urban population suffered most, with an estimated decline in living standards of the order of 65% (Hyden p.1399).”

A World Bank study on Sub-Saharan Africa in 1981 known as the Berg Report strongly claimed that the regulatory economic policy framework of the African governments was more responsible for the economic crisis than the external shocks. Thus, the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) became the focus of the economic recovery and reconstruction in Africa throughout the 1980s. The SAPs contain three distinctive components – stabilization, market liberalization and public sector reforms. The thrust of SAPs is to remove the state's interventions in order to make market mechanisms as a prime mover of economic

growth. However, it has become undisputed that SAPs bear intolerable costs in social dimensions; the poor's life has become poorer.

After the collapse of the centrally command economic regimes in Eastern Europe in the mid-1980s, “Good Governance” and “Democrati-zation” were added to development focus in the 1990s. Many African countries began to abandon their socialist-oriented one-party system, and started to introduce market economy according to guidance given by the World Bank and the IMF. On the other hand, many catch phrases like “Women in Development (WID)” and “Environmental Sustainability” have appeared one after another. These shifts in development focus are clear evidence that the problems involved in the pursuit of development have become so much complex and diversified that any single discipline alone cannot properly deal with them.

We defined “development” as a process to improve the living standards of people by a bundle of means. Development planning is one of the means which have widely been adopted by many governments. This is particularly significant in the African countries. When new nations have come into existence one after another in Africa in the 1960s, the World Bank established a West African Office and an East African Office in 1964 to help African countries prepare development plans (Waterstone p.36), and by the beginning of 1965, 35 independent African countries formulated development plans. Since then the rapid spread of planning has produced hundreds of development plans in African countries because “possession of national development plan often makes it easier to obtain foreign grants or loans (Waterstone p.104).” There are countries where comprehensive plans have been prepared in a few weeks in an office in

the capital without the planners having consulted with operating ministries and agencies. In some countries "development plans were prepared by foreign advisers or consultants with little participation by those who would be responsible for their execution and with little relation to the fragile administrative structure in the country concerned (Waterstone p.107)." It is natural that many plans in African countries were abandoned with little successes.

The SAPs in the African countries in the 1980s have taught the World Bank, the IMF and many donors that "ownership" of a development plan is crucial in successful implementation. The term "ownership" implies that a policy packages have to be produced by the African government itself, though with the donors' help being indispensable. The lack of "ownership" could have been avoided if the donors including the World Bank and the IMF had taken what Waterstone warned of in the mid-1960s into account. However, we find that similar problems still persist in the SAP policy formulation and its implementation in the 1990s. John Toye says:

Despite the Bank's eagerness to publicize instances of local programme design, these were always a minority, and most of them were more or less ventriloquized by the missions, if not actually written by them. The missions themselves were not wholly free agents in the negotiation either. The Bank's country desk officers in Washington and their superiors had to be satisfied with a package (Toye, 1994:30).

According to a group of independent advisers to the government of Tanzania, the original draft of the October 1994 Policy Framework Paper of Tanzania was in fact prepared in Washington (Helleier p.12). Therefore, the advisory group strongly emphasized that the African

governments should insist on its right to prepare the first drafts of future PFPs, and donors should honor that right (Ibid., p.37).

There have been a number of problems in the planning of development because it has always been monopolized by a hand of economists. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) warned of a narrow technical method in development planning as early as 1959. It pointed out that "it is one of the weakness of development programming generally and one based on aggregative investment targets specifically, that it may concentrate attention too much on tangible investment as the only method of raising income (ECA p.32)." What was missing is a matter of human dimensions. "In the development of a country, the prime mover is the human factor. Where human beings are well organized and motivated, and willing to work together, lack of capital, while a handicap, is a handicap which can be overcome (Waterstone P.77)." In this respect, it is very important for us to carefully listen into W. Hooper's view on the Nigerian 1962-68 Development Plan. He says:

In my view, the plan has no "Soul". The most pressing questions from the man in the street are left without an answer. What action is to be taken to limit graft and corruption? Have I better chance in the capital city where the spending is going on, or should I stay on the farm? Should my son remain a farmer or look for a messenger's job? How can I get business or farming advice for my personal "development program? Are we going to get a new school, road, hospital, and water supply for town? What can our community do to help? What is expected of me? Answers to some of these questions would

be embarrassing, but they are necessary if the individual is to act in the best interest of the country. Perhaps several politicians would be more secure if the truth was told today to forestall the suspicions of tomorrow (Hooper p.2).

It has already been mentioned that most of the development plans in Africa in the 1960s were formulated by foreign economic advisers, and that even in the 1990s similar problem still prevails. How then can it be possible to take the "Soul" into account in their development planning?

It appears that there has been widening divergence between the state and the people in Africa. In fact, if development were to occur, it has to reflect the planning of the government elite, but it is the people themselves who have to carry out the practical work. This is why the gap between the "policy-makers' world of economy" and the "people's world of economy" is so crucial. When a planning agency draws up a development program, say a PFP, it is wrong to assume that the people will act on the same basis of rationality which the planning agency holds, because it is neither the planning agency nor its blueprint for development which bring growth (Inukai 1979:59-60).

It is useful in this respect to mention Japan's first ten year development plan of 1884 which is called the *Kogyo Iken*. At a time of transition from feudal agrarian economy to modern capitalistic market economy in the mid-19th century, Japan experienced serious chaos both in its economy and society; Japan committed a false start by misunderstanding modernization as Westernization. The *Kogyo Iken* was an outcome of its earnest effort to correct the wrong path. It describes the Japan in the early 1880s as follows:

We find that our people are very poor. They do not have adequate clothing, food, or housing. There are many people whose income is so meager that they can scarcely be called human beings. Many people are in debt, while few have savings.... The armed forces, education, public health, flood control embankment and other civil engineering projects, all these matters of national importance are imperfect; the existence of our nation seems to be in name only for our land has no subsistence as a nation.... It is crucial, therefore, for the nation to postpone any new programs of government enterprises in order to pay serious attention to the living standard of the people (Ibid p.39).

The *Kogyo Iken* proposed that "it is important to encourage our people to make progress within the means they possess at present, and to strive to further advancement of their business ventures." Therefore, the following two principles were adopted as practical policy guidelines. "any enterprises must be promoted in conformity with specific local conditions" and that "enterprises must be promoted in conformity with the capital available." In other words, the guidance offered was practical and immediate. It provided what the people could not afford within the constraints of their resources – capital, technology, organization and willingness. We may claim that this approach is an outcome of a serious effort to reduce the gap between the policy-makers world of economy and the people's world of economy.

This remarkable framework for development planning was made possible by Masana Maeda's concept of modernization. Maeda was one of the high ranking bureaucrats in the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. As the

leader of the planning team, he learned from the failures of false start in misunderstanding modernization as Westernization. Thus he arrived at a new definition: Modernization is not Westernization but a continuous improvement of the tradition by adopting scientific knowledge and institutions (Inukai 1981). On the basis of this concept of modernization, the planners embarked upon a massive survey of the prevailing socio-economic conditions of Japan in the early 1880s. They were directed by one wisdom: Ask the fact before planning (Inukai 1979:42-43). In other words, the planning was undertaken on the principle of "Field Science" as mentioned at the beginning of this paper.

Now let us consider again the SAPs in Africa. It is commonly agreed that the World Bank/IMF's approach has a bias in its inclination to neoclassical economics which emphasizes a role of a free market in economic growth. However, "markets are social institutions which structure, organize and legitimize contractual agreements and the exchange of property right (H. Stein 1994:1838)." Thus, any analysis of a market has to consider not only economic transactions but also its social dimensions as well. Also, Shigeru Ishikawa points out that the internal structure of rural community in Asia are organized by three distinctive relationally organized layers: the subsistence family's economic relations at the bottom, the communally related economy in the middle, and the market economy at the top (Ishikawa 1990:199). The first two layers can be summarized as a habit-oriented economy (*Kanshu Keizai*) in which such traditional system as work sharing and income sharing used to guarantee the people's livelihood. When the habit-oriented economy grows up gradually to produce exchangeable surpluses, it will shift to market economy. This internal

structure of Asian rural community also represents the reality of the African economy, in particular that of rural areas where the majority of the people are living even now. Then, we have to conclude that the neoclassical economics can deal with a very limited segment of the African economy.

It is widely believed that the ownership of land will provide incentives for individuals to improve their land and help rural credit markets to develop, because land is good collateral. However, the land issues in Africa appear to be more complex than what this idea claims. "There is a variety of coincidental and competing claims based on clienage and kinship that do not disappear after a shift toward private property rights (Stein P.1836)." It is said that there are three forms of land ownership in African rural community: the right to claim ownership, the right to use and dispose of land, and the right use and enjoy the fruits of the land. Since these forms of land ownership are a product of a complex web of social interaction in the habit-oriented economy, the unification of these types of ownerships to a "modern" form of the private ownership implies "an entirely different set of social norms, values and structure which entails much more than new categories of legally defined property rights. The other forms of socially defined property rights are in many cases more legitimate than the new definitions of private property rights superimposed in the rural areas. Economic reform efforts need to fully comprehend the basis of the existing legitimacy and the transformative prerequisites (and implications) of moving toward new form of legitimacy (Ibid. p.1836)."

We defined the term "field science" in this paper to mean objective study of the historically given socio-economic conditions in order for us

to formulate policy measure for improving the standards of living of the people. It embraces many disciplines of humanities, social science and a part of natural science, and it encourages an interdisciplinary approach in its research programs. In conclusion, let us join our hands together under the banner of field science so that we can contribute to the eradication of poverty in the world.

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