

LOCAL LEVEL INSTITUTIONS OF PARTICIPATION IN A CHANGING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT: THE KENYAN EXPERIENCE

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I. INTRODUCTION: THE PRIMACY OF INSTITUTIONS

Institution-building is now well recognised as a major factor in realising the various objectives of development effort especially at the local level.¹ This is however only a recent turn of events that has received forceful expression, mostly since the 1980s. This new development can be attributed mainly to a shift to a local, people-centred approach in both the perceptions and practice of socio-economic development with the twin objectives of improved living standards and further democratisation of the political system for participation by the majority population at the grassroots.²

The significant emergent trend which institution-building is part and parcel of is the present direct focus on the compelling necessity of sustainability of initiatives in development particularly in the rural areas. The focus on sustainability, especially in terms of implementation of rural programmes, has meant direct and tangible socio-economic benefits being realised overtime as a result of the development of the capacity of rural people to manage their own affairs via institutions under their control.³

In the African context, sustainability of rural development has indeed become of urgent concern owing to seemingly endless crises of stagnation, poverty and famine which, more so since the 1980s,

have increasingly thrown into constant disarray the overall socio-economic development of rural dwellers. In the extreme cases of drought and wars the capacity of the victims, that are mostly groups of rural dwellers, has been ruined and their hopes for a future completely shattered.

The basic contention of the proponents of institution-building approach to rural development is that through strong local institutions the capacity of rural residents to determine and control their own affairs can be realised. Thus they can equitably reap the benefits of growth, have a stake in development initiatives which they are a party to and their hopes for a future are raised and also made realistic.⁴

The local level institutions for development would comprise government and non government (NGOs) organisations, community organisations including indigenous based self-help groups, co-operatives etc. The essential roles of these various organisations would include acting as catalysts for local development initiatives and projects, disseminators of new ideas and innovations, providers of critical information and, most importantly, playing the role of intermediaries between the people and government.

In this discussion first a brief historical background explaining the rise of African states is presented, in section two of the paper, putting them into a political and economic development context. The new focus on institution-building is highlighted in section three having already in the introduction, specifically underlined the primacy of institutions. African development is analysed from an institutional perspective using the example of African smallholder credit. A conceptual framework for understanding the nature and role of institution-building in socio-

economic development in contemporary Africa is then advanced.

In the fourth section of the paper, institutional arrangements at the local level and popular participation in local development in Kenya are analysed in three ways. To begin with by examining rural development policy and practice. Followed by an appraisal of the nature and consequences of essentially social movement harambee self-help activities. Lastly irrigation effort directed towards enhancing agricultural production is examined.

A fifth section is an attempt to briefly draw up the implications of structural adjustment for local level development in the African context. The final sixth section contains the concluding remarks.

II . THE RISE OF AFRICAN STATES AND THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

Historical Background - Colonisation and The Emergence of African States

The emergence of present African states, especially their boundaries, it is generally agreed, was the work of West European capitalist nations dating back to their scramble for Africa in the last century. The scramble was a great impetus to capitalist penetration of the continent that became increasingly intense over the years. But it was by no means the beginning of development in Africa.

Development viewed broadly as a higher level of organisation by man to gain control over his environment was taking place in Africa

even before the Europeans came. This is evidenced by the organisation of various clans as well as kingdoms, skills in crafts, and the use of iron, to mention only a few examples. These precolonisation developments were, however, superceded by capitalist development with the coming of the Europeans whose culture, and attendant relatively advanced capitalist mode of production, soon became dominant mainly due to the fact that their adoption was backed by force. It is in this connection that one finds the origins of the fallacy that European or western culture is synonymous with development while African traditions are major hindrances to development.

The development in question can only be taken to imply western notion of "development" which in visual terms means big cities, industrial plants, wide tarmac roads, European-type schools, radios, television etc. It is interesting to note that even Africans subscribed to this biased notion of development well into the post independence period. This was conspicuously evident in the development plans formulated by the newly independent African states.

It is however not the intention here to go into details of the contradictions resulting from the western notion of development, particularly during the colonial period. The point to note is that these contradictions of colonialism shaped the evolution of nation-states in Africa, the climax of which was the attainment of independence by these nations. In other words various expectations were raised, be they for ascension to power, employment, equality or an improved standard of livelihood which could not be fulfilled within the colonial system, but rather within independent, sovereign nation-states. This was the essence of the nationalist struggle which brought about, as it turned out, political but not

economic independence to national entities which had colonial territorial boundaries left intact but were far from united.

Thus to bring about national integration and develop their economies became the immediate major goals of the leaders of these nations. To achieve these goals they relied on foreign advisers, mainly economists, who were concerned about the accuracy of their economic planning and development models and thereby ignored social and political factors in development. The consequence was that development was viewed in economic and generally western terms. Yet another significant consequence of this bias was that the rural sector was ignored. In retrospect it is now well established mainly from development experience of the emergent non-western states that there are factors other than economic ones in the development process. Also that national development needs to be viewed in total terms and not partially i.e. one sector or one region.

Economic Growth, Economic Development
and National Development

The widely held belief initially, regarding the relative contribution of agricultural and industrial development to national economic growth, was that industrialisation was the unique key to development. Thus the industrial sector, as the advanced sector, would be the source of alternative employment opportunities for the rural population. This would provide a growing demand for foodstuffs as well as agricultural raw materials which industry would process for domestic consumption and for export.⁵ This view relied heavily on aggregate economic models with a few easily quantifiable variables such as GNP, Capital Investment, exports and imports, and was of major consequence for development strategies. It was assumed that the major constraints to economic change were

capital, technology and skilled manpower. Hence the emphasis on foreign aid expectations for purposes of investment in manufacturing industries and easing of the so-called manpower bottlenecks.

The point at which development originated, where whatever amount of these resources available was to be concentrated initially, were the urban industrial centres. Thus the national planning strategies followed by most of the underdeveloped countries rested on the following premise: that industrialisation would generate sufficient momentum to trickle down to the rural areas, thereby providing an avenue for the vast rural populace to participate in the development process.

However in the light of the experience of these countries it was increasingly recognised that the functions which the agricultural and industrial sectors must perform in order for development to occur were totally interdependent. On the one hand, the agricultural sector had to release resources for the industrial sector, which in turn had to be capable of absorbing them. On the other hand, the release of resources, by and of itself, were not sufficient for economic development to take place. These conditions should occur simultaneously. This release-cum-absorption was consequently recognised as the key to development. Thus whereas in the past agriculture, at first the whole sector and then the subsistence sector, was viewed as the passive partner in the development process, it came to be typically regarded as an active, coequal partner with the industrial sector. The major implication was that there was a shift of concern from economic growth to the problem of economic development. The latter had agricultural development in particular and rural development generally as its key components.

In retrospect, the shift in concern which occurred in the 60s is a reflection of an increasing recognition of the need for analysis of the agricultural development problems of these economies which have certain characteristics in common. For example, a seemingly static agricultural technology is widespread, as are rapid increases in the demand for farm products in response to population and income growth, and the "pathological" growth of urban centres. The emphasis on rural development also represents a pragmatic response to the lack of success of much of the development effort and foreign assistance of both national and international agencies in the Third World.⁶

It is in the rural areas that the vast majority of the population of the underdeveloped countries resides and earns its livelihood from agriculture. In Kenya, this amounts to some ninety percent (90%) of the population of the country, ninety-five percent (95%) of whom depend on agriculture for their living. It should, however, be stressed that rural development objectives extend beyond any particular sector. They encompass improved national productivity, increased employment and hence higher incomes, and also minimum acceptable levels of food, shelter, education and health.

A national programme of rural development should include a mix of activities comprising projects to raise agricultural output, create new employment, improve health and education, expand communications and improve housing. Thus, agricultural development is a necessary but not sufficient condition for national development to be realised to any meaningful extent. But it is also true, that although it is only one sector, in view of the fact that agriculture employs a labour force well over eighty percent (80%) of the entire African population in the continent, improvement of

agriculture will have far reaching positive consequences for national development effort.

It is important to stress that in striving for these goals, whether in food, employment, habitat, health or education, it is not the absolute scarcity of resources which explains poverty in the Third World, but rather their distribution. Since access to such resources is usually determined by social and economic structures in society, which may not be conducive to an optimum distribution, any significant redistribution in the patterns of access may be expected only with some transformation of these structures. In short, access to resources which is determined by socio-economic differences is a basic problem in the development process, both nationally and in the rural sector.

Development can therefore be defined as a deliberately planned action, designed to fundamentally alter the economic and social structures, thereby effecting a process of resource allocation and concomitant resource generation. The latter is the structural change most salient to development which should aim at sufficient improvements in the life of the majority of the population. This view implicitly calls for balanced development and considers the twin objectives of equity and growth as equally important. In this context National Development means a movement towards greater awareness among a given people, the ultimate aim being to achieve as much equality and cohesion as possible so that the nation, as one people, can realise collective goals, and aspirations and forge ahead. Rural development should, therefore, be seen in terms of its contribution towards National Development so defined, and the various rural development activities geared to that end.

III. INSTITUTION-BUILDING FOCUS

African Development: An Institutional Perspective

The origins, nature and implications of development obviously have been widely debated among and within social science disciplines yielding various formulations of the concept development.⁷ A significant point in the debate for this discussion is the broad acceptance of an important role for institutions in the social, political and economic dimensions of development.

However, due to changing conceptualisations of development there have likewise been widely varying perceptions of the specific roles and even the nature of institutions in the development process. A good case in point is political development which for a long time has been equated with "modern politics" and characterised as the organization of political institutions such as parties, public bureaucracy, parliament, judiciary, etc., as these have been known to operate in western democracies. This, in brief, meant introducing similar institutions to those found in western political systems and "modernising values" they embody. On the contrary, this has not been borne out by the political development experience of most African countries. As a matter of fact the debate over multiparty democracy is presently hotter than ever in sub-Saharan Africa.⁸

It should however be recalled that during the 1950s and on through the 1960s it was economists who tended to dominate development thinking and hence the debate. This is clearly evidenced by the dominance, during that period of economic perspectives using models, e.g. dual sector, labour surplus and

stages of growth, that later became notorious for their omission of non-economic or human factors in the process of development.⁹

The key point for this analysis is at any rate that these economic models, as in the case of modern politics, had a strong western bias emphasising the inevitable reliance, in the advanced stages of development, on western-type capitalist economic institutions, notably the free market operating within a monetary economy. Economic policy focused on importation of western capital, technology and skilled manpower for purposes of growth and industrialisation. The traditional and underdeveloped sectors, especially agriculture, were conspicuously neglected.

Thus apart from the fact that these western models had excessive macro orientation, in the African context, they did not focus on her resource endowments and institutions. The culture, attitudes, preferences and institutions of the African people were in fact viewed as obstacles to development. Planners and policy-makers therefore assumed that indigenous population, especially the rural poor, needed to be led into modernity in virtually every aspect of their livelihood including culture.

In the same vein, in the initial stages of development planning in newly independent African countries, there was a dominant preoccupation with economic variables. The practice then was to have economists, in most cases foreign, draw up development plans sitting at the capital. Their substantive concern was with the accuracy of their models and not with socio-political variables including input decisions by politicians, and even the administrators who were supposed to serve, and who were also expected to participate in the implementation. In other words, institutional development for planning and plan implementation was

initially not part of the agenda for development planning theory and practice.

The Institutions of African Smallholder Credit

A good case in point regarding development theory and practice is credit programmes. Credit, being concerned with money or finance generally, by virtue of intellectual division of labour between academic disciplines became automatically the preserve of economics where there is even a subdiscipline of monetary economics. But institutions, being concerned with social values and organization, fell outside economics, mainly in the disciplines of sociology and political science. The inevitable consequence has been to view credit and even specialised institutions created essentially for credit distributions, in purely economic terms, for instance, investment capital, commercial interest rates, security, default, repayment rates, etc.

In short, there was heavy reliance on market criteria considerations in the thinking and the actual design of credit and the attendant organizational arrangements. The realisation that there had been a complete disregard of key issues in institutional development such as participation and sustainability came recently but much later in the post-independence period.

In direct reference to African smallholder credit evolution, it can be said that at first, when rural peasants were not considered economic men, there was obviously no thought given to smallholder credit needs by the colonial authorities and none was available in practice. Likewise industrialisation-led economic growth strategy virtually ruled out smallholder credit in the agricultural sector. As a matter of fact a popular broad policy prescription under this

particular strategy was to encourage the transfer of labour and agricultural "surplus" by turning the terms of trade against agriculture.¹⁰

The emergence of official smallholder credit was therefore closely linked to the much wider concern with modernisation of the agricultural sector. In most sub-Saharan African countries historically this happened towards the end of the colonisation period. In the case of Kenya in particular it was at this point in time that the concern with agricultural modernisation embraced the African farmers and hence some measure of their socio-economic development with a view to the impending political independence. This trend actually continued, basically the same, well into the early years of independence under the Swynnerton Plan.¹¹

A significant key consideration for this discussion is the enhanced understanding of the nature of the rural society, especially its socio-economic structure, which has given rise to new perceptions of rural development. The crux of the matter is that there has been the recognition of non-economic, mostly indigenous, factors as playing a major role in development especially in the rural areas. However, in the case of rural smallholder credit in the African context the role of indigenous elements is yet to be fully recognised.

Institution-Building: A Conceptual Framework

The conceptualisation of institutionalisation found in organisation theory is a key theoretical source and should form the basis for an accurate and informative analysis of institution-building for participation in contemporary African political and

economic development. In the institutional approach to the study of organisations institutionalisation is characterised as a process. It happens to an organisation overtime, reflecting the organisation's own distinctive history, the people who have been in it, the groups it embodies and vested interests they have created, and the way the organisation has adapted to its environment.

An organisation, therefore, becomes an institution when it takes on values, including ways of acting and beliefs valued for their own sake, thereby acquiring a self, a distinctive identity. Thus in perhaps its most significant meaning, "to institutionalise" is to infuse with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand.¹²

As technical instruments, organisations are designed as means to definite goals and are therefore expendable. Institutions whether conceived as groups or practices, are however, not just technical instruments. They in addition, have also a "natural" dimension, being products of interaction and adaptation and having become receptacles of group idealism. They are therefore less readily expendable.¹³

A fundamental argument made in reference to administrative systems but of relevance to other forms of organisation, including institutions, should be noted here. The essence of the argument is that no single institutional or behavioural pattern can be said to characterise the process of political modernisation, nor is there a single way to organise the administration and to staff the public bureaucracy of a developing society. The broader implication here is that no single form of institution can be presumed to be "good" for all circumstances.¹⁴

The various institutions of smallholder credit in the rural areas should therefore be selectively viewed in terms of their suitability and effectiveness in serving the myriad purposes of a cross section of the rural population, and in particular reaching the rural poor. The crux of the argument is that having preconceived notions of suitability of such institutions for any developing society as a whole, or across two or more societies, may only end up undermining development initiative(s). The critical point to make, therefore, is that non-indigenous and/or indigenous based institutions may be suitable for organising smallholder credit, for instance, depending on the particular circumstances.¹⁵

IV. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPATION IN KENYA

Local Level Development

Local level development can be taken to mean broad-based socio-economic development induced and managed locally. The key feature of a local development strategy is that its focus is on the local population and its potential.

The emphasis in the strategy is on mobilising and improving local capacity, in particular experience and local knowledge, entrepreneurship and human capital. These should enable local communities to mobilise local resources more efficiently, overcome locational, structural or physical including resources disadvantages. Furthermore, government and other private effort can be made more effective and relevant to local needs. Thus a greater control can be exercised over local resources and development notably through strong local level development institutions.¹⁶

1.0 The Shift to Rural Development in Kenya

Kenya's policy pronouncements on the shift in focus of development strategy to rural development date back to early 1970's.

The 1970-74 Development Plan, stressing the role of rural development and agriculture stated that, "the key strategy for this Plan is to direct an increasing share of the total resources available to the nation towards the rural areas."¹⁷ The subsequent 1974-78 Development Plan in the same vein states more precisely that:

The attainment of the fundamental goal of this Plan of an improvement in the distribution of national income, with faster rural development and faster growth in development opportunities, will be dependent in very large measure on the attainment of the particular goals that have been set for the agricultural sector, since it is from agriculture that more than 90% of the population will be primarily dependent for their livelihood....¹⁸

The idea behind these policy statements was to launch an attack on the inequitable distribution of income, to ensure that the benefits of independent development would be more fairly allocated.

This was as a result of the fact that in spite of the rapid growth of the economy, the problems associated with a rapidly growing population and severe disparities in rural-urban development became increasingly more apparent than they were at the time of independence.

The policy framework in the current 1989-1993 Development Plan puts emphasis on the Integrated Approach. This is a strategy which in essence means first that a limited set of issues considered to be

of primary importance to development such as employment creation, improved management of human and financial resources, regional balance, expansion in agricultural and industrial production, preservation and development of natural resources and improvement of public welfare are addressed at a time.

Secondly, the approach is an organisational strategy, applied already in District Development Planning in Kenya, based on the principle of complementarity between the ministries whose approaches are mainly sectoral, and the districts where various sectors are brought together in support of rural development activities. The basic idea is that all arms of the government ensure improved communication, acceptance of common goals and cohesion of efforts in seeking to resolve the primary development issues.¹⁹

1.1 Kenya's Rural Development Institutions

The shift in focus to rural development had direct implications for local level institutional development. In 1970, the government embarked on an extensive reorganisation to place the provinces and districts at the centre of rural development planning.

Responsibility for rural development planning was initially delegated to the provinces. But the Ndegwa Commission in 1971 found severe limitations on the ability of province committees to participate in "bottom-up" development. The commission reported an urgent need for more trained personnel within provinces and districts, better self-integration of the central ministries field activities, and deconcentration of authority to plan and administer development programmes to the districts.

Districts were consequently given greater responsibility for rural development planning as from 1974. District development officers (DDOs) and district planning officers (DPOs) were assigned to assist district development committees (DDCs), which were expanded to give representation to government officials, members of parliament, and local organisations.

The DDC was thus assigned a pivotal role in rural development which has become increasingly evident as it has taken on more responsibilities. The key function is identification of projects and resources and coordination of implementation with emphasis on active participation of local communities. As a matter of fact with the current strategy of District Focus for Rural Development the DDCs have wide ranging powers over projects and resources emanating from government, non-governmental organisations and voluntary self-help groups.

There is in addition to the DDC, the locational development committee (LDCs) which is at a lower level below the district. In these committees, local administration head, viz., Chief, District Commissioner etc. sit together with elected representatives and local party officials to plan and decide on development activities.

In reality it is the local provincial administration in the persons of District Officers, Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs etc. that controls and is the institution formally charged with coordinating development activities. The provincial administration plays the role of mobilising the people for participation in development, especially harambee effort, and also has a law and order function.

The technical government ministries e.g. agriculture, education, health, water, culture and social services etc. form another category of government institutions having a major role in

rural development. The government budgetary allocations in particular are channelled through these ministries. It is significant that while spending in these ministries has for a long time been controlled from Nairobi, resulting quite often in failure to spend the money allocated, it is now mandatory with District Focus that such spending is controlled by the DDCs. Since these ministries are the institutions directly responsible for actual planning and implementation, working through the DDCs raises prospects for more appropriate coordination of development in the rural areas.

The technical ministries also provide the local level non-governmental institutions with a linkage to government machinery. Local level organisations are formally linked to specific government technical ministries by way of mere registration or direct supervision and control. Thus self-help harambee groups are registered with Ministry for Culture and Social Services, while cooperative societies are under the supervision and control of the Ministry of Cooperative Development. The cooperatives in particular have been mainly developed from "above" through government administrative intervention rather than from "below" as a result of initiative at the grassroots. The point being made, at any rate, is that government technical ministries provide expertise to non-governmental organisations, including donor NGOs, that are operating in the rural areas. In addition these ministries have supervisory and control powers over these organisations.

1.2 Participation in Rural Development

The key issue raised by local level development is popular participation in the development process. In other words the nature of involvement of the people themselves in determining their own

affairs. The initiative should originate from the local people themselves, they should be involved in execution, and they should be the beneficiaries of their development activities.²⁰

It is therefore useful to make a distinction between on the one hand, "participation" as a shared influence in decentralised structures, designed both to produce structural change at the local level and develop individual capabilities. On the other hand is "participation" as mass involvement without influence in development projects, dictated by technical considerations. The rural development experience in most African nations points to the conclusion that it is the latter, and not the former involving changes in political and socio-economic structures, which is the norm.

The existing trend, in most African countries, of participation guided by technical expertise as opposed to genuine participation can be attributed to certain key factors. First it can be said that the public bureaucracy itself is an obstacle to genuine participation. The source of the problem is the belief that the civil service possesses superior knowledge and skills coupled with the fact that it has been all along assigned a very big role in the development process. This has meant continued entrenchment of the public bureaucracy with negative consequences for participation by the rural populace in local level planning for development.²¹

Secondly, leadership at the national level is not in any way interested in the emergence of an autonomous power that can challenge its authority, which could be the logical outcome of genuine participation. Likewise the local power elites are averse to any kind of participation which is likely to give rise to rivals in the local scene and threaten their personal interests. To guard

against such an eventuality the method devised by the local elite in Kenya is to monopolise control over voluntary self-help activities.

2.0 Harambee Self-Help Activities: An Appraisal

It would be wrong to even imply, especially in the case of Kenya, that people in the rural areas generally do not benefit from self-help activities. Schools built on harambee basis create more places for pupils particularly those who complete primary schools and are too young to take up employment but fail to get places in government aided secondary schools. The health centres and water projects are particularly beneficial to women and children. There is indeed creation of employment and petty business opportunities locally. But the crux of the matter is not simply whether the rural populace partake of certain benefits. Rather, the fundamental question is whether the benefits accrue as a result of changed structural arrangements that will ensure self-sustaining local level development.

A useful line of inquiry seems to be to directly address the issues: by whom and from whom resources are mobilised, who benefits and what if any is the contribution to national development. Contrary to frequent claims by politicians themselves! that politics and development can be separated it does not need a stretch of the imagination to realise that all development activities particularly self-help ones are highly political. To begin with those who initiate practically all the self-help projects are usually wealthy farmers, businessmen, shopkeepers and Members of Parliament who together constitute the local political power elite. The guests of honour during fund raising meetings are mostly wealthy national politicians.

The major motive is apparently political gain considering how much emphasis is put especially during election time on how many projects initiated. In addition there are at times intense political rivalry in the leadership of the self-help projects which connotes power struggle that can be very divisive locally. In the same vein parochial consciousness aroused by these power struggles are likely to have negative effects on national cohesion.

The resources mobilised are either in cash or kind, with the former currently tending to take precedence over the latter. The main sources are first and foremost the guest of honour and his friends, foreign donors especially NGOs, the central government, and the local population working in conjunction with their clan members in the urban areas. The disproportionately large sums of money brought from outside the rural areas, especially by the guest of honour and his friends is startling and makes one wonder about claims made regarding the people developing themselves and becoming self-reliant.

A somewhat contradictory argument usually advanced is that self-help activities provide ways of transferring capital from the urban "better off" to the rural poor. What is not made quite clear is how, if this trend continues, there will be self confidence and self-reliance and not dependency. At another level one can argue that the capital being transferred back is simply a compensation to rural areas for capital extracted earlier on. Two major ways in which capital is extracted are, by paying low wages to rural workers and hence low prices for farm products, and by rural parents paying school fees for those who eventually get wage employment in the urban areas. A similar argument could be advanced in the case of government grants which come from taxes and also applies to foreign donors if we move further back in history. In the case of

foreign donors it can be further argued that their donations have the effect of not only increasing dependency but also strengthening neocolonial ties that have adverse effects on national development.

As regards the rural donors themselves, an argument which proponents of self-help activities, as presently practised, would not want to face up to is that most of the rural residents can ill afford to make frequent contributions, especially in cash. It is in this argument that lies the explanation for the use of coercion by government officials in the field to extract contributions. The evidence of forced contribution is overwhelmingly highlighted by the President's own public denunciation of forced harambee in 1990 followed by a directive banning public servants from collecting harambee funds. This forced contribution has indeed been referred to by some as forced taxation indicating how much it is devoid of any voluntary element.

It is also very disheartening to hear of resources mobilised lying idle in banks and therefore not being utilised. This can be interpreted as a case of there being no release-cum-absorption of resources which we have argued is essential for development. In the same vein more places created by building schools means more educated people to fill the ranks of the unemployed which is yet another instance of a waste of resources. Projects not utilised to the benefit of local population, due to failure on the part of the government to take them over or failure of the rural population to meet maintenance costs, also fall under this category.

I would suggest that when thinking of the role of self-help activities let us for a change focus on the extent to which national development goals are being met. The import of this appraisal has been first, that they are exacerbating inequality

within and between rural areas. There are in fact reports that in some areas a rural bourgeoisie has already emerged.

Secondly, these activities are devoid of genuine participation as evidenced by the domination of self-help groups by the local power elite and the public bureaucracy which manifests itself in the form of coercive measures to involve the rural populace in the projects. This does not augur well for increasing awareness and identification of collective national goals, which is an important premise for national commitment and unity. The argument of the powerlessness of the peasants who need others to articulate their needs will not do. Lastly, if the rationale for self-help is to pool limited resources it defies logic that we should witness so much waste of mobilised resources as if we have more than we need.

3.0 Participation in Irrigation Agriculture: Kenya's Experience

The Kenyan experience of farmers participation in irrigation agriculture can be understood by examining the institutions, or channels of participation, together with patterns of social interactions, which constitute the key elements in the evolution of the social infrastructure. In the case of Kenya the relationships of crucial consideration are those between the National Irrigation Board (NIB), NGOs and the Government vis-à-vis the farmers in the irrigation schemes.^{2 2}

3.1 Institutional Arrangements: Small Scale and Large Scale Irrigation

In terms of institutional arrangements in the small scale village irrigation schemes the two major categories of institutions easily identifiable are first government institutions. These

comprise the technical government ministry responsible for small scale irrigation namely, the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and the local provincial administration charged with co-ordinating development activities and also having a law and order function in the rural areas as already discussed in relation to rural development generally.

The second category of institutions are those in which villagers have a form of representation. These include development committees from the locational to district level for planning development activities. There are also scheme committees to which villagers elect representatives to deal purely with irrigation scheme matters. It is through this latter committee that the NGOs and the volunteers they bring mostly channel their input. The MOA is also represented in this committee and plays a key role in its operations.

In the large scale Bura Irrigation Scheme one finds a contrasting situation. The institutional arrangements are all virtually geared towards a primary goal of higher productivity. Furthermore they are all patterned to replicate the NIB organisational arrangements at its headquarters in Nairobi. There is for instance the organisational division into agriculture, engineering and accounts found also at the scheme level. Furthermore, the so-called village committees in Bura are really an extension of the NIB institutions for control and meant to ensure high levels of production. It is also significant that until 1985 the local provincial administration that has the strongest presence of all government institutions in rural areas of Kenya was in effect relegated to operation on the periphery of this NIB scheme in the Huruma and Manyatta villages.

It would seem that Bura being a large scheme in a remote area, an inclination, if not commitment, towards building up of social infrastructure could have been demonstrated by moves towards decentralisation of relevant institutions. To the contrary first, the Settlement Officer based in Bura who was in charge of social welfare matters of tenants worked under strict rules from Nairobi. He was in effect simply receiving tenants in Bura and everything else was done according to NIB irrigation production rules. Secondly, Bura Project Co-ordinator in charge of development during construction phase worked under the authority of the General Manager at the headquarters. Even more important is the fact that the Co-ordinator's office was located, not on site in Bura, but in the NIB Head Office in Nairobi.

3.2 Farmers' Participation

The foregoing discussion of institutional arrangements in irrigation schemes are a pointer to divergences of participation by farmers in different types of schemes. The evidence available, on the whole, points to greater participation in small scale as compared to large scale irrigation schemes. However even in the small scale schemes there are certain limitations on participation that should be of concern.

It is, therefore, only by addressing pertinent issues regarding participation including the motive force behind the project; actual objectives of the project; the approach, especially style and procedures for execution/implementation; scheme size; farmers status; returns reaped by farmers; farmers demonstration of genuine commitment; evolution of self-sustaining ability in the project etc.; that one can gain a more accurate broader understanding of the nature of participation in irrigation agriculture.

It is beyond the scope of this short analysis to exhaustively discuss these and other relevant issues. Therefore, a few only will be commented on briefly to build on the impressions given from the discussion of institutional framework above and thereby give a more satisfactory picture of the state of affairs regarding participation in irrigation schemes in Kenya.

To begin with the motive force behind irrigation schemes is of major importance as it relates to the origins of the project, especially whether the people themselves had an input. Even more important is the extent to which the project is a reflection of their felt need. It can be said categorically that in Kenya the motive force behind the origin of irrigation schemes is donor preferences dramatised by the Bura disaster that is leading to disillusionment with irrigation agriculture in the public sector.

It may be conceded that in the case of small scale irrigation schemes there has been a measure of involvement by way of people attending meetings (barazas) to initiate the irrigation projects and harambee money or labour contributions. It is also true that in a famine situation the people lack food and this can be interpreted as a felt need. All the same the evidence points to the fact that participation is minimal.

The general problem applicable to all other public sector irrigation schemes is that they are usually started as a response to crises, famine, landlessness, unemployment etc., not unlike the colonial administration irrigation ventures. The implication of this crisis orientation is that poor or no planning at all is done. In the case of Bura, the World Bank's own evaluation mission came up, after the fact, with a litany of findings which were not in

favour of the project that were available before project implementation but were totally ignored.²³

In brief, the conclusion is that there is rushed top-down approach that allows very little or no consultation of project participants resulting in project failure.²⁴ It is of no surprise at all that the public sector schemes should therefore be perceived as NIB or government schemes and in effect increase dependence. The case of NIB was worsened in Bura by the fact that it adopted an operating goal of higher production of a cash crop, cotton, deviating from the stated goal of settlement of the landless and unemployed.

The next broad area calling for comment is the style and procedures for execution/implementation. It is evident in the discussion of institutional framework, that the structures in place allow for minimal participation in small scale projects, but virtually none in the large scale Bura Project. In the latter case there were clear indications of authoritarianism not to mention the farmer's status as only tenants.

The issue to raise regarding scheme committees in the small scale projects is the lack of competence of committee members that results in "outsiders" running the schemes. The same point could be made about the large scale schemes committees assuming that they were allowed to operate independently to some extent. In fact the lack of technical competence at the project level, irrigation projects included, has been identified as a major constraint of popular participation at the grassroots.²⁵

The inference from this discussion of farmers participation is an apparent neglect of establishing the social infrastructure in irrigation schemes which are more difficult and in fact take much

longer to establish than the physical infrastructure especially in large schemes. The arguments point to the conclusion that social infrastructure should be as much, if not more, of a concern than the physical infrastructure. It is in this way that participation especially at the execution/implementation stage will be ensured. This will result in commitment and proper management that will go a long way towards making the project self-sustaining.

However, a priority for Kenya's irrigation agriculture is to have a national irrigation policy. Specifically, schemes should not be established following the dictates of donor agencies. The implementation procedures need to be defined and special attention paid to institutions that enhance participation at the grassroots.

V. STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMME AND LOCAL LEVEL DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1990s

The structural adjustment programme involving the implementation of a series of policy measures designed to redress imbalances in national economies and to promote healthy economic growth no doubt is a significant relevant concern for any discussion of sustainable local level development. This is on the assumption that adjustment measures directed to improvements in the overall performance of the economy have provisions for the integration and involvement of the local population, especially the poorer and more vulnerable groups, in the overall development process. The pitfalls of Kenya's local level development experience with smallholder credit, both small and large scale irrigation and even harambee self-help initiatives clearly do strongly underline the necessity of such a policy strategy.

There are however, empirical issues largely unresolved as yet by the range of work on effects of adjustment policies that remain to be addressed through data collection and systematic, quantitative analysis.²⁶ One may also add that these issues serve as important signals to limited prospects of African countries institutionalising the basis of long term development in the 1990s especially at the local level.

The first problem is being able to effectively take account of social dimensions of adjustment. This calls for paying equal attention to issues of income distribution as well as institutionalising people's participation in development and, at the same time, making improvements in the overall performance of the economy. The crux of the problem is coming up with the "best" combination of macro and local level policies for these varied social and economic purposes and choosing appropriate content and sequencing of adjustment measures to cater for the different sectors and groups. There have been pertinent concerns raised regarding, for instance, negative consequences of decontrol of prices and cost sharing in the provision of health services particularly for the rural poor.

Secondly, "gainers" and "losers" as a result of economic reform measures are all affected by changes in income, prices and productivity raising two issues for the policymakers - (a) to establish whether the distributions of economic well-being represent a permanent state or whether they are a temporary state during the period of adjustment; (b) establishing if the changes in distribution are due to policy or are the result of factors largely beyond the control of policymakers.²⁷

It would seem that the basic problem underlying the disparity

between local level development and structural adjustment concerns emanates from fundamental differences in scope of concerns and focus, the broad development objective notwithstanding. There is a definite bias for economic dimensions of development with emphasis on institutionalising market economy in the structural adjustment programmes. In contrast local-level development embodies a comprehensive socio-economic view of development emphasising building local-level institutions for participation. The implication is that these disparities need to be reconciled if Kenya and other African countries currently burdened by conditionalities of structural adjustment programmes are to reap the benefits of sustainable development if not in the 1990s, then in the longer term at least.

VI. CONCLUSION

The key argument in this analysis is that local level development viewed as subsuming local government and community development is critical for overall national socio-economic development. The realisation of local level development however hinges on institution-building for popular participation in the development process.

The experience with smallholder credit in Kenya has indeed shown that institutions emerging out of government initiative have neither addressed themselves to the actual local problems of production by smallholder farmers nor have they created a broad-based suitable framework to accomodate overall credit needs of this particular group of rural households. This is attributed mainly to the fact that these particular institutions inherited a structure with an orientation towards cash crop production geared essentially

to economic growth and not balanced all round development.

The analysis of local development participation in Kenya points to three broad issues with regard to institutionalising development in the rural areas. First is the issue of public bureaucracy norms and structures especially whether there is a law and order or developmental orientation and the extent to which there is room for decentralisation resulting in power sharing with the local level. Second is the nature of social structure, specifically the role of local and national elites in enhancing community development. Third is the response of political leaders to demands for better living standards and the extent of their commitment to genuine participation with a view to achieving self-sustaining local level development. All in all, these issues are a useful pointer to the seriousness with which rural poverty and other related problems of the rural areas, even in irrigation settlement schemes, are being addressed and the future prospects for sustainable development in the African context. It can therefore be said that it is imperative that policy measures introduced under structural adjustment programmes need to address these issues to institutionalise development and make the process self-sustaining.

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