

Human Development in Africa

Current challenges and perspectives

Dr. Ali Elhawal

Faculty of art – Al – Fateh University

Introduction:

This study aims at shedding light on human development in Africa now and in the past. In order to achieve this purpose models of development implemented in Africa shall be reviewed, especially those implemented during the past three decades, then the study would attempt to analyze in brief such development models and to define their African context as well as defining the hardships and challenges that accompanied their implementation. Regardless of the positively or negativity of them, what this study tried to discover is that development still faces big challenges and obstacles which Africa is going to witness during the third millennium. These obstacles and hardships ought to be removed if African human development were to be hopeful.

Such confrontation demands that Africa engenders a future vision of its own. This study's purpose is to define the general characteristics of such confrontation in the form of development programs and preoccupations adopted in three main fields:

- (1) education and knowledge,
- (2) health care, and
- (3) social security, and to future accelerate the production and functioning of knowledge within an African context interacting with an international human development context.

Models of Development and the African situation:

Contemporary theories of development vary in their characterization of human development. By reviewing the literature on this matter, one may specify three main human development theories: (1) the social theory, that which assigns a human understanding to human development, (2) the economic theory which assigns an economic concept to human development, particularly the role the individual and education play, in upgrading the production sector of the economy, and (3) the political theory of human development, which gives the issue of human rights and democracy much prominence in the development process of the society, the community and the individual.

With some elaboration one may say that the social theory of human development emphasizes caring for people and providing them with human services, the first of which are education, health care and social security whereas the economic theory of human development views human development as one which provides, in the first place, a decent life for the individual through securing him a permanent income.

This source of income ought not be associated with social or political pressures, such as linking the provision of a permanent income with a political or an ideological loyalty to the state. The third human development theory, on the other

hand, is associated considerably with democracy and human rights.

That is to say, there can be no talk about any human development unless there is a high level of democracy and a participation of the people in materializing their lives, their self-determination and leading their lives free from any pressures, fear or coercion. That is to say, freedom must prevail and fear should be eliminated. In other words, this theory assumes that we can not talk about human development if the legal rights of the individual are lacking in his society. No one can deprive him of such right without legal and constitutional basis and legal judicial mechanisms, such as courts and other authorities. This is also very much linked to the right for the freedom of expression choice and association with others without being of aid of or pressured by anyone. It looks as if that this theory views human development as cherishing security and peace and distancing fear, threat, oppression and coercion, it also views human development as a tree that would not grow and produce fruit without nurturing it and its interaction with the environment and the air. Human development gets nourished with democracy and participation in public life. Its air and breathing represent the freedom of mind and the enjoyment of freedom and human rights, on top of which the freedom of choice and self-determination and the elimination of fear, threat, oppression and coercion.

Whatever are the dimensions and aspects these three theories emphasize, they are totally linked and complementary, and each of which constitutes a façade for the other two. In fact any talk about development and human development is not educated and aware, and this can only come true with education (illiteracy in the African society is alarming), and unless the individual gets his proper food and his biological being is guaranteed (provision of a permanent source of income), any

talk about human development would take the form of just praising and flattering, especially if the individual is not free to choose or give his opinion and publicly express all that peacefully and legally without being afraid of any thing such as depriving him of his source of income. Despite these three theoretical trends of human development, it appears as if the three theories were one consisting of three dimensions, nevertheless, for purposes relating to this study emphasis and attention will be devoted to the first of them (the social theory) which considers human development one that provides education, health care and the social security for the individual. It may be the case that our selection of this theory governed once and for all, and in our view, by the significance of education which is associated with the mind, the greatest of God's endowment to humans. It is the essence and secret of civilization, life and good health, for a sound mind is in a sound body. Security, care and social security are associated with the group and the society in which the individual lives. Maintaining social balance and stability is a precondition to any civilization in any human society. It is quite obvious human development requires and means the safety of the environment and the protection and maintenance of its natural resources permanent and renewable for the next generations, scientifically speaking, it is hard to elaborate on these overlapping and interconnected dimensions. Therefore, we are going to focus our attention on the social theory of human development with some reference to other theories whenever necessary.

Choices of human development in Africa

The basic question raised by any researcher in this field is, which human development theory was implemented in

Africa during the past three decades? What results were obtained by implementing one theory rather than implementing any other one, and what is the result of human development in Africa in particular? By reviewing the various studies and literature on the subject, one may say that like other third world countries or developing countries, Africa started, after gaining independence, implementing various developmental models, or economic and social development models that included within their theoretical and scientific context the issue of human development. If we are to adopt this criterion, one can say that there are three models of development implemented in Africa during its recent history and after the independence from big western powers (France and Britain). (1) The first model is the Western liberal capitalist model, (2) The socialist model that was influenced by the Marxist theory and its implementation model which combines the previous two models in one African national particularity that is sometimes homogeneous and contradictory at other times. That is to say, there has been a capitalist socialist development simultaneously, practiced in an African context bearing its own particularity. By examining the theoretical trends and their content in reality, we find out that these development models have been implemented in recent African history since its independence. They were implemented under the influence of internal African powers (interaction of the African social entity) and external powers (embodied in the west, mostly the Western countries that had ruled over most of Africa the Africa). The capitalist development model was implemented by those African states, which were politically, socially and civilizationally linked to big western countries, like France, Britain, and America quite recently. The socialist Marxist development model, on the other hand, was implemented by African countries, which were historically linked to the western countries mentioned above. However, the leaders and politicians of these African countries adopt in their

thinking and intellectual vision the Marxist theory of development, as applied in the ex-Soviet Union and the eastern Socialist European countries, and the Chinese People's Republic with lesser degrees. The third model of development, we believe is a national African indigenous model that attempted to combine capitalism with western essence and the Marxist Socialism as well as the African particularities that has not been easy to be implemented in reality and did not produce good results, for it fluctuated between two worlds and two contradictory desires, namely, the freedom of man in obtaining wealth by all possible means and limiting man's freedom and controlling his desires and needs. The African spirit, then, and African needs remained shattered between two worlds and two conflicting desires. We believe, therefore, that there has never been an indigenous national African model of development and human development. Everything was devoted to the African homeland, to his African tribe, family or his personal individual interest. Thus, the African homeland and the African individual was shattered between so many conflicting interests, wishes and needs. Every one in Africa still lives the way his ancestors had left him, poor, needful, lacking education and health care and unable to engage in an easy work. All that he can find a menial work or to migrate to some other place in the world where he can earn his living.

Once again the question that arises is, to what extent have these models succeeded and brought about some kind of development in Africa? It is a hard question to be answered quickly and easily. Nevertheless, the reality that most African and international studies and reports have affirmed is that none of these three models was effective or achieving high levels of development either economically (by increasing good levels of the economic output), or through its humanitarian dimension (by increasing the social levels of development, particularly

increasing schooling enrollment eliminating illiteracy, higher child vaccination rates, reduction of child mortality rates below age 5, higher age expectancy rates, higher literacy rates, and realization of the social security status for the African individual as well as giving a real opportunity for the individual to participate in establishing the public African life).

In fact, none of these three development models that were devoted to analyzing human development in Africa in the past decades was effective, or was successful enough in realizing development either in its sheer economic dimension (by increasing productivity) or in its human dimension (by increasing the social services, particularly the spread of education elimination of illiteracy, provision of proper medical care, and realization of social security for the African individual, or paving the way for the full participation of the individual in making and influencing their public life). Despite the fact that each of the three development models has had positive and negative aspects, each has had its own characteristics, challenges and needs of its of its success and failure in transforming and transferring African life from the past to the present and preparing it for the future African society. What had really happened, however, was that Africa underwent a historical change by transforming its dependency in the past on its hand-to-mouth economy to a modern international economy in which Africans were supposed to sell their natural resources, and raw material at very cheap prices, or to sell their effort exerted on their own land at very low wages. It was hoped, and this was what the African leaders and the policy makes of its development had hoped also, that these models of development would transfer the continent from the past to the present and to engage forcefully and with various potentials in a process leading to entering the future and realizing high levels of social and economic growth that would render Africa a better place for life where the African

individual is enabled to lead a decent life (a good deal of Africans live on earning less than one dollar per day), and receives the proper education and medical care (Africa is now plagued with AIDS, where HIV carriers exceed 25 million).

By comparison, however, we find out that some Asian states, began, at the same time, their dependency on western funding of their development. Nevertheless, no comparison can be drawn between African economic or human development and the Asian development in South-East-Asia, or what have come to be known as the "Seven Tigers". It might be the case that Africa possesses more natural resources than East Asian States. The researcher is bewildered at these great difference and disparity between the type of African development and that of East Asian States?. Is it the case that the aggravated development situation in Africa is attributed to the development model adopted in Africa and the circumstances enveloping its implementation? Or is the case that there have been external factors, various internal-external factors that differ from those to which east Asian states were subjected. Africa and the African environment differ from those of East Asia, and so are its nature, and its implemented social and economic philosophy? This is, in fact, a broad field of research for students studying development economics and sociology. The argument could be that East Asian states (the seven tigers) adopted the western capitalist model in their development. They, therefore, received much support and financial assistance in their development from the west. But both groups were subjected to western influence and philosophy with regard to their economy and policies. Hence, there could be other factors underlying the African Social structure which was torn by tribal conflicts and linguistic and ethnic disputes, or the nature of the administrative structure that runs the development process in Africa, such as administration corruption, bribery, favoritism,

tribalism and tribal bias, as well as civil wars, incompetence of the human resource as a result of the high rates of illiteracy, insufficiency of education, training scientific research, the spread of disease, the last of which is AIDS which taking millions of African lives. Is it the case that Africa is destined to being a mine or a reservoir of raw material, which are processed in western developed countries? Is Africa destined to remain markets to the industrial goods manufactured in the west or in the east. As we mentioned above, this is a dilemma that requires further African society and individual have not reached the proper education, training and cultural and scientific level to be able to invest his economic resources and devote them for his present and his future? Whatever the case, I believe if we can not understand this problem scientifically, and no planning is made in order to come up with scientific solutions for this, the repercussions are going to be negative and extensive and destructive for Africa, its peoples, its development, and its human development in the future.

Human development and the existing African situation

Whether we embark on analyzing the western capitalist model which Africa has made it functional in its development, or the socialist Marxist model which was implemented for extended time periods in Africa, or the African national model with its national African nature, the result would be one. African development and human development is still slow according to have already been achieved. Africa is still at the first steps of growth and achievement. After more than a quarter of a century, development and human development in Africa still echoes the following results:

1. The spread of education

African international studies indicate that Africa has made progress in the educational field more that made in medical care. This is seen in illiteracy related rates among men and women. Despite all that the ratio of illiteracy is still high, mounting to %41 in the continent compared to other parts of the world, as it is in its lowest levels in this region. Moreover, the enrollment percentage of basic education for the age group of this educational level is in its lowest rate, that is very far from those rates specified by UNESCO at Jomptan Conference in 1991, which recommended that literacy rates should reach %75 by 2000. of specific importance, also, is female education, which dwindled slowly, that illiterate girls rate was %66 in 1985 and %49 in 1998. despite this obvious progress, and despite the fact that female enrollment is still unsatisfactory and less than fore boys, what is obvious is that female enrollment has risen in primary schools for girls. Similarly, female enrollment in secondary schools doubled during the past two decades. This indicates that more girls in Africa are now enrolled in primary and secondary schools than any other time. Nevertheless rates of school-registered girls are still low and better rates are registered in cities rather than in villages and rural areas.

2. *Medical care*

Mortality among children is an acute problem in Africa where %10 of children less than 5 years die out of all the new borns. 151 children die out of 1000 children before age five. Despite the fact that the mortality rate in many countries exceeds 200/1000, Africa saw the least improvement in the mortality rate of children below age five in 1970, while other countries, like kinya, Zambia, Mozambique and Côte d'Ivoire have seen a rise in child mortality rate during the nineties of the last century, comparable to 53/1000 in east Asia, and 9/1000 in

high income nations. Even if African low income is put into consideration, mortality rates of children below age five would be very high, compared to international standards, and those in east Asia and Arab States.

In spite of the fact that life expectancy in Africa has risen slightly, it is occurring slowly in comparison with other parts of the world. Since 1990 the spread of AIDS led to a decrease in the life expectancy rate in Africa, particularly in countries inflicted with this contagion. In Zimbabwe, for instance, life expectancy decreased by 5 years, while in Botswana it went down by more than 10 years. In more than 21 African countries, there are now more %7 adults who are HIV positive adults. The great majority of them are in South Africa where is one out of five adult people afflicted with the disease. It may be noted also that countries like Niger, Sudan, and Mauritania have the least afflictions, something which give hope that the disease could be eradicated.

3. *The spread of poverty*

The latest statistics indicate that there are about 300 million Africans can hardly earn 65 cents a day. The annual income of the individual in 24 African countries is less than \$350 per year. The least income is in Ethiopia (\$100), and (\$120) in Burundi. The World Bank Report shows that the demographic transformation in all Africa is still very slow.

Fertility rates are growing down, especially in countries of higher income and better capability of acquiring contraceptives. Some African countries, however, enjoy the highest fertility rates in the world, namely, Niger, %7.3, Somalia, %7.2, Angola and Burkina Faso %6.7. In spite of the fact that things are changing, the age group of the population (00 - 14 years) has decreased, and is not expected to go down

and alters the developmental process or the average income of the individual.

4. Rapid urbanization and city expansions

Increasing urbanization and the stumble, and staggering of rural development, and the migration of Africans from rural areas to the city, led to rendering Africa of the highest urban population explosion in developing countries. Besides, it is expected, according to the status quo, that the population of cities and urban areas would exceed that of villages and rural centers in the continent by 2025. In countries like Nigeria, Kinea, and Tanzania, the people living now in cities are two times than those who had lived there twenty years earlier. In Mozambique the percentage has tripled during the same period.

5. The tribal foundation of the state

Although long time has elapsed since the modern state emerged in Africa, scientifically speaking, the African State still witnesses numerous contradictions and faces so many social (tribal) and political conflicts. This has its impact on development renders the African State a new political structure bearing the characteristics of an ancient tribal one. What is so important is that the features of the modern African State are tribalism with the tribal conflicts associated with it. As a result development, and human development, is greatly influenced with the tribal map, its distribution and power centers within it. The tribe is defined scientifically as the one, which has the political power, or it is the strongest socially. It is the one, also, which benefits from the developmental process and its return, either in the development projects. It has economic and political privileges. The tribal and ethnic conflicts that occurred in Mali in the sixties of the last century are the best proof. This is coupled with the influence of the Sultans and the chiefs of

the tribes and the cultural and ethnic groups which play a significant part in directing and controlling the modern African State, if not in sharing and centering the political power in the tribe or in one race at the expense of another. Despite the fact that this is irrelevant to human development in Africa, it may, in a way or another, influence human development, if not have its imprint on allocating the resources of development, and their distribution on the different areas and tribes of the modern African State. I should say that ascending to high power and administrative positions and taking major decisions in the modern African State are still tied up by the tribal past and the role it plays in work mechanisms, either in development

6. Regional and Civil Wars and the World Economy

Africa is characterized by being susceptible, more than any other continent, to conflicts and civil and regional wars. This slowed its development and made it devote its resources to buying weapons and financing battles instead of funding various development projects. In addition, Africa is played with maladministration and corruption as well as being influenced by world change, such as the high coast of oil while at the same time Africa raw materials suffered from a collapse of prices. Besides, growth in Africa is now less than 5%, which is the required rate if a surge in the number of the poor were to be contained in the continent. Such circumstances led to creating an improper commercial exchange of goods among most African States. African industry, also, is now unable to produce enough, quality and competitive goods in world markets, either in industrialized developed countries or in countries whose economy is better off, such as Latin America States and East Asia. This is coupled with the globalization process of world economy and world trade treaties, laxation of duties, customs and taxes on goods coming from western states to Africa which has resulted ultimately to a recession in African economy and

slowed African economic growth and the production of African goods and services.

7. Human development and globalization

The entire African continent is subjected to the violent winds of globalization and neotechnology, as well as new formula of work and life. The external force of globalization and the internal social pressures in the form of joblessness, decline of education, poverty, epidemics, diseases (particularly AIDS) and tribal conflicts constitute some of the outstanding challenges confronting Africa and impeding its pursuit of acceptable rates of human development. Nevertheless, and as all international data state, none of this is comparable to the threat of AIDS and its HIV virus and the impact they have on African human development. Africa is the worst place afflicted and played with this epidemic which is undermining all efforts the continent is exerting in order to raise its development rates, as a whole and human development in particular, moreover, there is also an ethical, humanitarian and global imperative that all states of the world, particularly, the richer ones, cooperate and assist Africa financially and technically, so that Africans can achieve their human development and cherish justice, fraternity and human decency in accordance with an old African wise saying, "If your neighbour is in good shape, you, yourself, must be in good shape.)

African Vision of the Future

Despite the fact that the purpose of this paper is not to tackle or discuss the future, for it is a difficult and complicated undertaking that requires the efforts of not only one person, rather the efforts of institutions and scholars. The basic purpose of this paper, however, is to shed light on African human development and the challenges it is facing. On the grounds of what has been mentioned earlier, and according to some studies, the picture is not pessimistic. Neither according to African perspectives, nor according to international ones can African human development realize its objectives, unless proper atmosphere and planning are there to activate and encourage human development, accelerating its pace in the continent. Some of the fields that should be taken care of and dealt with are:

1. Defining a specific model for human development, one that derives its components from to sources: (a) African particularity and peculiarity, (b) African norms and characteristics and establishing the society of the future that is harmonious and complementary with the outside world.
2. Developing human skills and administrative cadres in critical areas in order to promote and improve the economic and social development, including human development, in a clear vision of an African model.
3. Giving more attention to education and diversifying educational and training programs on the national and African levels, provided that the programs are integrated and complementary, with international standards and norms of education and scientific research.

4. Improving and effectively and training the cadres necessary for running and developing education and vocational training, and functioning the educational system to serve a comprehensive development and realize better rates and levels of human development.
5. Enhancing and consolidating African solidarity and regional collective cooperation through information and experts-exchanging networks, and establishing joint academic and developmental institutions bilaterally, regionally or internationally.
6. Developing and modernizing higher education and academic research institutions so as to serve the human dimension of development and produce a kind of knowledge that is linked to the African reality, and to benefit from regional and international experts.
7. Developing and modernizing the intellectual and social cadres in order to promote social and cultural values and abandon those values that impede the realization of development and the establishment of the modern African society. These include ethnic fanaticism, tribal conflicts, destructive political and ideological differences, which paralyze the mind and the hands and mobilize to triggering disputes conflicts and wars instead of work and productions, which only drain human and financial resources and bring deprivation and slow death to the African individual when African badly need a space and unity that bring together all African peoples and geographical areas and provide atmospheres of work, cooperation and complementarity of all, and of all other blocks and spaces. In a situation like

this one human development will inevitably achieve its humanitarian goals for all modern African peoples and societies.

Summary and concluding remarks

This paper has been an attempt to shed light on human development in Africa during the past three decades. It became clear from the previous presentation that Africa has so far implemented three models for human development, namely, (1) the Western capitalist model, (2) the socialist Marxist model, and (3) the African national model which combined the first two models. Implementing this third model, I must say, was based on internal African criteria and external international criteria. Practically, each of these three models has had its negative and positive aspects. Nevertheless, human development in Africa is facing hardships and numerous challenges, some of which are the spread of education, specially among women and rural girls, the spread of poverty, AIDS and the tribal basis of the African social and political structure with its various repercussions.

Finally, the researcher concludes that Africa needs a vision for development, including human development. This vision must part from education and the production of knowledge, medical cars and social security. And in order to implement such vision effectively Africa and all Africans should develop a social, and cultural base for the African society, on top of which amending the tribal structure in a way that protects the individual, instead of functioning it in politics and the decision-making process. The African modern society, therefore, would be built on broad partnerships of the people in a way that helps them establish good living rather than on tribal and ethnic division and influence. This era and time has no

place, but for big groupings and blocks, either in Africa or elsewhere.

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