

DEVELOPMENT AID, SOLIDARITY AND THE COMMON GOOD

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Introduction

Kwame Nkrumah in his auto biography cited the poet Tennyson when he wrote;

So many worlds, so much to do,

So little done, such things to be,

Carol Lancaster in her book *Aid to Africa: So Much to Do, So Little Done* argues that Tennyson's words are a good summary of the situation of aid to Africa. Although Africa has been the highest recipient of aid¹, it has had the least stimulation of development in comparison with other continents. Lancaster concludes,

Aid to Africa has typically had the poorest success record of any worldwide (often half or fewer aid-financed activities achieve their goals), and projects and programs there have proven the least sustainable. In some cases, only one out of five projects and programs endures after aid funding is terminated. ...There is also evidence that the large and continuous aid flows have in some cases had negative side effects on development in the region².

The existence and availability of aid does not always translate to integral human development in the countries and communities that receive aid. Neither does it ensure the fulfillment of the desires, needs and rights of local aided communities. However, does this mean aid should be abolished?

Dambisa Moyo³ argues for the abolition of systematic aid to Africa. She is not so much interested in emergency and charity based aid but with "large systematic cash transfers from rich countries to African governments ...in form of concessional loans ... or grants"⁴. She argues that it is this aid that has "hampered, stifled and retarded Africa's development"⁵.

I argue, in this paper that even if Moyo is right about the impact of aid in Africa, so far, it does not follow from this that aid will always have that impact. It depends on how it is organized and how it is given and received. If, as Lancaster asserts, aid has been more successful in other continents, then development aid need not be abolished. But the reasons for its failure in Africa and success elsewhere will need to be understood.

¹ Moyo, D., says that "Since the 1940s, approximately US\$1 trillion of aid has been transferred from rich countries to Africa.", Moyo, D, *Dead Aid: Why Aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa*, Allen Lane, 2009:35

² Lancaster, Carol, *Aid to Africa: So Much to Do So Little Done*, A Century Foundation Book, The University of Chicago Press, 1999:2-3.

³ Moyo, D., *Dead Aid: Why Aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa*, Allen Lane, 2009

⁴ Moyo, D., *Dead Aid: Why Aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa*, Allen Lane, 2009:8

⁵ Moyo, D, 2009:9

Moyo and other commentators who are against aid rely on a cost/benefit analysis. They do not look at aid as a cultural phenomenon. They miss the fact that aid is an expression of human relationships. Aid can be a human way of showing and confirming human relationships. This, of course is not to say that aid cannot be abused or used as a political or economic tool. Of course it is being abused. And Moyo is right to point that out. I also support her proposal that “Systematic aid will be a component of *Dead Aid* proposal, but only insofar as its presence decreases as other financial alternatives take hold”. But she is wrong to call for “an aid-free world”⁶. An aid free-world cannot be a human society.

The aim of this paper is not to demonstrate, against Moyo, that, development aid works. The paper proposes aid as a cultural aspect of human moral life. It is an expression of human solidarity in the context of the common good. It is an aspect of life that cannot be done away with without fundamentally affecting the expression of natural, moral human relationships. But like all aspects of human life, it can be misunderstood and abused.

Conceptualizing Aid in the Context of the Human Family

The human situation has been conceptualized in different ways. Sometimes human beings are seen as cogs in political or economic machines⁷. At other times, people conceptualise the human condition as fundamental that of war.⁸ When humans are reduced to “amorphous masses or tools of industry”, their humanity is lost and they are not seen “as persons informed and responsible, uniting freely in human solidarities”.⁹ When people are conceptualized in natural communities and solidarities, development aid ceases to be first and foremost a political or economic tool but as part of the condition and expression of human relationships. It is an expression of human solidarity.

It is natural and indeed human for people to feel moved by the suffering of others as when 300 000 people died of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean.

Within days of the tsunami, one of the worst natural disasters in recent history had given rise to the world’s greatest international relief effort, showing what can be achieved through global solidarity when the international community commits itself to a great endeavour.¹⁰

Human beings, in the age of globalization, are more and more feeling that they are one family. The differences between peoples, races and ethnicity are more and more seen as accidental rather than essential. As Bernice Reagon Johnson aptly pointed out in 1981, “We’ve pretty much come to the end of a time when you can have a space that is ‘yours

⁶ Moyo, D., 2009:76

⁷ Refer to some interpretations of Karl Marx and the experiences of the former Society Union for visions of both political and economic machines.

⁸ Refer to Samuel Huntington’s vision of “clash of civilizations”, Huntington, S.P., “The Clash of Civilizations”, *Foreign Affairs*, 72, Summer 1993:22-47

⁹ McLean, G.F., “Solidarity and Subsidiarity as the Social Exercise of Human Freedom”, *Civil Society as Democratic Practice*, (eds.), Antonio F. Perez, Semou Pathe Gueye and Fenggang Yang, The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington D.C., 2005:89

¹⁰ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2005: International cooperation at a crossroads: Aid, trade and security in an unequal world*, Oxford, 2005.

only' – just for people you want to be there... we've finished with that kind of isolating. There is nowhere you can go and only be with people who are like you. It's over. Give it up."¹¹ International organizations, non-governmental and civic organizations are organized attempts to institutionalize human solidarity that goes beyond the distinctions and barriers between us. They are a social expression of the desire to make others develop and have abundant life.

Integral Development

In the social teaching of the church development means comprehensive and integrated growth of all human beings and all of God's creation. This growth means that every individual creature must be allowed to grow in all its dimensions. For human beings, it means that every individual should grow physically, socially, psychologically, morally, spiritually, historically and in all other dimensions. Each of these dimensions has its needs. Each being demands that space, institutions, systems, virtues and environments be cultivated to allow its fulfillment. The challenge brought by this growth is that while each individual creature grows, it also must become part of the context within which all other creatures also grow to their own respective fruition. Integral development means that the growth of one creature entails and is integrated to the growth of its own kind and of other creatures. When the growth of one undermines the growth of others, development has ceased to be integral.

Most social critics, of modern society, identify the ways in which modern society undermines integral development. Environmentalists, for example, point out how human beings have gathered so much power through industrialization and have produced so much wealth and yet this power has been at the expense of the environment and other species. Pope Paul's criticism of development is on how it focuses on the production and accumulation of industrial power and wealth and not on the development and flourishing of human beings as individuals in relationship to others. But to say this is not to be against development *per se*.

We all, as human family, have a moral duty to contribute to the creation of social, economic, political and cultural institutions, systems, structures, processes and personalities that facilitate the integral growth and fulfillment of every human person. As Pope Paul VI points out, "The reality of human solidarity, which is a benefit for us, also imposes a duty." (Pope Paul VI, 1967:11) This is what it means to work for the common good which is "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily." (*Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican II, December 1965:903)

It is in this context that development aid must be understood. We live in an interdependent reality. Globalisation has enhanced that interdependence at a global and local level. No part of the world can live without others. We now "quest for human connectedness and a new moral vision that transcends race, class, and gender divisions,

¹¹ Quoted in Sandercock, L., *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities*, John Wiley & Sons, 1998:117

without denying the cultural and material power of those divisions”.¹² There are many different relationships which can be developed between the various parts of the world. Relationships that involve development aid are only one kind of such relationships. Ideally, development aid is a facility that helps people in any part of the world to help others who are in another part of the world.

Human Relationships in the Context of Globalization.

Christian social teaching calls for the humanization of human history and the globalization process. This humanization is seen in two senses. First, history of the whole of God’s creation is looked at from the point of view of human beings. The questions that need to be asked constantly include, what, in the past, has happened to and what, now, is happening to human beings? What has happened and what is happening to their relationships to themselves, with each other and to the rest of creation? Humanization of history means that whatever story is told – on industrialization, modernization, economic development, political advancement or globalization – should never lose sight of the humanity of human beings. It must be a story of human being and not machines, money or power. When human beings are turned into some cog in a bigger machine, then history ceases to be human.

The second aspect of the humanization of history is about how history can be made to facilitate more the growth of human beings physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. Humanization of history is about how all inventions of human history, from ideas to institutions and systems, from money, economics, politics to science and technology – all these should not be allowed to enslave human beings who build them. Humanization of history means that all institutions and social processes will need to open up opportunities for the growth of and flourishing of human beings.

Humanization of the human

Populorum Progressio demonstrates the need for humans to develop not just to acquire more wealth and knowledge but *to be more*. It points out that the legitimate acquisition of wealth, knowledge and technology can lead to greed, “then we see hearts harden and minds close, and men and women no longer gather together in friendship but out of self-interest, which soon leads to opposition and disunity ...avarice is the most evident form of moral underdevelopment”¹³. The vision of human development in *Populorum Progressio*, is that authentic and integral human development ought to lead to the human being able to live “with love and friendship” with himself and herself and with others. At the same time human development must be “a development which is for each and all the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human”¹⁴. Explaining the meaning of “less human conditions” and “more human conditions” Pope Paul VI notes,

¹² Sandercock, L., *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities*, John Wiley & Sons, 1998:117

¹³ Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio: On the Development of Peoples*, paragraph 19, in David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (eds.), *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*: Orbis Books, 2006:244.

¹⁴ Ibid, paragraph 20.

Less human conditions: the lack of material necessities for those who are without the minimum essential for life, the moral deficiencies of those who are mutilated by selfishness. Less human conditions: oppressive social structures, whether due to the abuses of ownership or to the abuses of power, to the exploitation of workers or to unjust transactions. Conditions that are more human: the passage from misery toward the possession of necessities, victory over social scourges, the growth of knowledge, the acquisition of culture. Additional conditions that are more human: increased esteem for the dignity of others, the turning toward the spirit of poverty, cooperation of the common good, the will and desire for peace. Conditions that are still more human: the acknowledgement by human beings of supreme values, and of God their source and their finality.¹⁵

Development must be concerned with the cultivation of better human beings, cultivation of personal and social virtue, and the creation of conditions that continue, in sustainable ways, to uphold, widen and deepen human social conditions. While the human being is called upon to create humane social conditions, the conditions themselves are expected to be such that they cultivate good human personalities and relationships.

Development strategies in Africa

For Africa, the development story must include the fight against colonialism and the desire and struggles to be self-reliant. It must also include nation-building and the challenges of the effects of the liberation wars at the center of which looms the challenge of building the national state as a common good. These struggles are not only struggles to eradicate poverty, but also to eradicate exclusion and encourage social participation and the invigorating of African communities. This demands solidarity action. The role of aid in bringing about authentic and integral development depends greatly on the role of all partners (aid givers and aid receivers) and especially the participation by the poor and marginalized. This universal solidarity which involves participation, demands that all people are treated equal as they participate in determining the environment that affects their lives. The principle of subsidiarity demands that decisions be made as near as possible to the point of implementation and benefit. It would be wrong for givers of aid to ignore the desires of those who receive aid. Solidarity does not mean subordination of those to be helped.

The Role of Church Partners in Globalization

The Church as a universal body is capable of extricating itself from narrow national interests although it has not always been successful. The kinds of problems facing the globalised world require universal solidarity and a sense of the common good. The church has contributed to this in the following ways:

1. The church, as a transnational institution has facilitated a global outlook to human problems and the recognition of the global nature of most modern/postmodern developments. With a sense of the global human family, it has encouraged

¹⁵ Ibid, paragraph 21.

- looking at problems in the global context and from the point of view of the human person.
2. This has encouraged the development of global and ecumenical and interreligious cooperation. Ecumenism and interreligious dialogues, have allowed the development of religious moral power that is more and more being recognized by regional and global like the European Union, African Union, and United Nations.
 3. Cooperation among church partners has begun building a new countervailing moral power to dominant powers. While the nation state and business corporations are still the dominant social, economic and political forces, church partnerships are helping to make these forces more accountable and more human.

Through ‘the global campaign against poverty’, ‘fair trade campaigns’, ‘migration and employment networks’ and ‘monitoring of the development of global rule writing’, church partnerships and partnerships with other civic organizations have been speaking morality to power. A significant movement in the 1990s is the Jubilee 2000. Jubilee 2000, capitalized on the successes of the 1998 campaigns. They dominated the debates on debt and development in international media. Although their campaign was addressed to the IMF and the World Bank, they scored a major impact on voters in the most powerful creditor countries. More of this needs to be done for more issues especially on determining the character of development and development aid.

Identifying Existing Processes and Enhancing Integral Development

Existing processes of integrating the marginalized have used the concept of “poverty reduction” or “poverty alleviation”. They seek to reduce the level of poverty in the world. Poverty is sometimes defined in these processes in economic terms (less than \$2 per day) and at other times in non-economic terms (marginalization). There is a tendency, more and more to see poverty reduction efforts from the point of view of human persons and in more comprehensive terms and not just in economic terms. There is no doubt that Christian social teaching, including Pope Paul VI’s *Populorum Progressio* and the efforts of church networks as well as civic organizations have been in the forefront of pushing for this more comprehensive vision of development and poverty reduction efforts. In this comprehensive view, the role of markets is recognized but other factors too are recognized, with special attention to observing the level of development of each country or community, its cultures and developmental needs.

While it is true that even the World Bank has moved towards the more comprehensive approach to development, it is also true that one aspect of the vision of *Populorum Progressio* and Christian social teaching has not been fully appreciated. This is the idea of placing the human person at the center of development and being in solidarity with the human person especially the poor and marginalized. The comprehensive approach, in so far as it has developed today still takes a very macroeconomics approach to development. It focuses on studying whole systems of production and distribution and the relationships among the sectors of the economies. In this analysis, human beings are seen as consumers, as labor, business and never as full human beings in the manner described above and as emphasized in *Populorum Progressio*.

Why Do Governments Give Aid?

At this juncture, it might be useful to ask the question why governments actually give aid. Carol Lancaster¹⁶, gives three main reasons. They are as follows:

1. *Diplomacy*: Governments use aid to smaller countries in order to gain international recognition. They also use it to bribe smaller countries in strategic places so that they can establish military bases. Governments use aid to get support votes in the UN. Aid is used to supporting regimes that are of some importance to powerful countries. Corrupt leaders in the third world have survived on aid from powerful countries.
2. *Commercial Objectives*: Governments use aid to support their own national companies. This point has been made in reference to the USA government aid to Iraq. Governments also use bribery so that its goods can be bought by other countries. This explains why sometimes less powerful governments sign trade agreements which undermine their own local businesses.
3. *Cultural objectives*: Governments use aid to promote their religion, language, and culture

We can observe that governments hardly give aid for humanitarian reasons. They do not necessarily conceptualize aid in terms of solidarity or the common good. This the challenge of the church and all people of goodwill to encourage a new way of looking at aid. Although givers of aid do not give it for humanitarian reasons, Carol Lancaster is still positive about the role of international aid. She demonstrates how the bureaucratic demands and procedures of aid giving countries make it difficult for aid to achieve poverty reduction in countries in need. Governments have demanded aid to yield business opportunities for their citizens because business people in their countries have demanded those opportunities. To the extent that church partnerships have demanded their governments to realize humanitarian goals, governments have been pushed to those directions. But only when governments feel the moral power of church partnerships on the streets, in boardrooms, on the press, will they respond. This is what the Jubilee 2000 success story can teach us. Yet this success story should be placed in the context of the tenacity of governments' and business interests. This means that the conceptualization of development aid as expression of solidarity has to be worked for. The church, in its social teaching needs to encourage the moral vision of aid through its lobbying and advocacy work.

4. Developing Ideas about Development and Improving Technologies

Many aid processes focus on technological innovations that are aimed at making land, labor, and capital more productive. Such innovations come from applied research. Much development aid has been in the form of research. Many governments and international aid organizations are engaged in giving aid in form of research. Sometimes research on

¹⁶ Lancaster, Carol, *Aid to Africa: So Much to Do So Little Done*, A Century Foundation Book, The University of Chicago Press, 1999.

the meaning of development itself has been used to dis-empower¹⁷ people in developing countries. Local African NGOs are also dis-empowered by concepts and priorities of development that are developed at the international level, which are then used to determine how development will be carried out locally¹⁸.

Sometimes development processes have been abandoned because of new fads on development. In the late 1990s, we have seen many international aid organizations changing from supporting relief work and the support of hospitals, schools, income generating projects to move into work on human-rights, democracy and good governance. There has sometimes been a failure to appreciate the fact that poor people will find it easier to participate in democratic processes when their basic needs are responded to and basic infrastructure is in place. The attempt to focus on human rights and constitutional reforms in very poor communities has often failed.

6 Millennium Development Goals: Making Global commitments

Poverty has become a global concern. The UN and the multinational institutions like the World Bank, WTO, have also initiated poverty reduction processes. In September 2000, some 150 heads of state attended the Millennium Summit where they signed the MDGs, pledging to cut poverty in half by 2015. The eight MDGs they committed themselves to included to , 1) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, 2) achieve universal primary school enrollment, 3) promote gender equality and empower women 4) reduce child mortality, 5) improve maternal health, 6) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, 7) ensure environmental stability, and 8) develop a global partnership for development. This commitment recognized the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and aimed to respond appropriately. The MDGs are a good way of cultivating the interdependence virtues and the skills to ensure that development aid does achieve some positive results.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers: Engaging the big powers

One of the resultant successes of the Jubilee 2000 campaign was the fact that by 1999 the IMF and the World Bank were including poverty alleviation in their strategies. They were also shifting to include ‘participation’ and ‘ownership’ into the poverty alleviation processes. However this success must be sobered by the fact that creditor countries rejected multilateral debt relief. They offer stiff resistance but sometimes they carry out strategic withdrawals. In 1999 they offered various strategies for debt relief. Hence the bank and the fund together with the Jubilee international coalition and other NGOs reviewed the old HIPC processes and formalized the input of NGOs into the HIPC processes. According to the new processes, the borrowing country would develop the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP) with the participation of its country’s people through the NGOs and civil society. Unless the church partners continue to put sustained

¹⁷ Alex de Waal, *Famine Crimes: Politics & The Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*, AAI, James Currey & Indiana University Press, 1997. The book argues that, “the intrusion of the humanitarian institutions represents, in an insidious but profound way, a disempowerment of the people directly engaged in the crisis, which drains their capacity to find a solution” and that “The humanitarian discourse itself, whatever its content, reinforces the humanitarians’ moral ownership of famine and similar crises, at the expense of the people who are suffering.” (Alex de Waal, 1997:xvi)

¹⁸ Michael, Sarah, *Undermining Development: The Absence of Power among Local NGOs in Africa*, James Currey, Oxford, 2004.

pressure on Western nations and the multilateral banks, the participation that is suggested for the PRSPs will not be meaningful. There will be more of consultation than real participation of local people. The demands of the PRSPs will continue to overstretch the authorities in borrowing countries and the PRSPs will have a tendency of undermining local institutions and poverty reduction processes. They will be a means for the World Bank to add more conditionalities to borrowers. Already some writers have started to criticize the PRSP framework as bureaucratic and incapable of giving poverty reduction strategies to local players and facilitating comprehensive participation of affected people. This adds pressure for the church to push harder for the humanization of PRSP processes.

Building Cultural Capital: Starting with what already exists

Poverty alleviation processes are not intrinsically valuable despite impression given by the international humanitarian industry. Neither are markets, despite neo-liberalism. Indeed markets can be used as tools for poverty reduction. What are intrinsically valuable are human beings and all of God's creation. Authentic and integral development is about the growth and flourishing of human beings and the rest of creation. Poverty is a symptom of things gone wrong. Poverty alleviation efforts are their remedies. But those efforts contribute to the building of a better world, better relationships and better human beings. While the story of development can be told without markets, it cannot be told without human beings and God's creation. However, we are lucky that we have markets, but we should not be slaves to tools we have built. We must build on what we already have. Some people have expressed this point in terms of the building of social capital.

Building up of social capital must start with building good people and sustainable communities. This is what *Populorum Progressio* emphasized. Development cannot happen without good people and good communities. This entails the cultivation of virtues in people and in institutions. But the virtues and the people need to be sustained by appropriate institutions, systems and processes. All this entails the need for social and cultural transformation that builds into international networks. But this building up must start with what already exists and then strengthen, deepen, and expand it. The church and its partners as a powerful lobbying and advocacy group must build up power and influence to strengthen human solidarity through poverty reduction processes being implemented at local, national, regional, continental and global levels. And yet it must not itself be trapped by power.

Conclusion

Development aid can be humanized. It should not be abolished. It needs to be re-conceptualised and redesigned. But this process is a political process in which the church will have to play a critical role. Aid must guard against ignoring the different levels of social organization, local initiatives, knowledges and strategies. It must acknowledge and recognize already existing, especially local efforts and programs. All these are big challenges that must be met. And they can be met.

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