LECTURE 10

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

Development is not purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social system. According to Todaro and Smith (2011), development is process of improving the quality of all human lives with three equally important aspects. These are:

1. Raising peoples’ living levels, i.e. incomes and consumption, levels of food, medical services, education through relevant growth processes

2. Creating conditions conducive to the growth of peoples’ self-esteem through the establishment of social, political and economic systems and institutions which promote human dignity and respect

3. Increasing peoples’ freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables, e.g. varieties of goods and services

Development is socially sustainable when it achieves social justice via equitable resource allocation, eradicates poverty, and provides social services, such as education, health and others to all members of the society, especially the neediest. It seeks to build a just and cohesive society.

Alternative views of development

Development as Economic Growth- too often commodity output as opposed to people is emphasized-measures of growth in GNP. Note here the persistence of a dual economy where the export sector contains small number of workers but draws technology as opposed to traditional sector where most people work and is dominated by inefficient technology

Development as Modernization- emphasizes process of social change which is required to produce economic advancement; examines changes in social, psychological and political processes; How to develop wealth oriented behavior and values in individuals; profit seeking rather than subsistence and self-sufficiency and shift from commodity to human approach with investment in education and skill training.

Development as Distributive Justice- view development as improving basic needs. Its interest is in social justice which has raised three issues:

1. Nature of goods and services provided by governments

2. Matter of access of these public goods to different social classes

3. How burden of development can be shared among these classes

The target groups include small farmers, landless, urban under-employed and unemployed or generally marginalized groups in society. Social cultural dimensions of develop thus focus on among others how the power structure affect development?; they examine sources of
empowerment, inequality and discrimination and reflect on the need to devise more people centered approaches which stress empowerment and participation

Social development concepts

Concept of power relations
According to Cooke and Kothari (2001:5), participation is aimed at making people central to development by encouraging beneficiary involvement in interventions that affect them and over which they previously had limited control and influence. However, they argue that in practice, participation facilitates power discrepancies and the question arises on whether the relative power of different actors advances development outcomes. Recent debates have articulated the need to address power relations as a key variable in explaining the decline in people’s participation on matters affecting their lives (Cleaver 2001; Hickey and Mohan 2005). As rightly argued by Sneddon and Fox (2007:2162), however participatory a development project can be, it cannot escape the limitations derived from power relations in society. In order to understand how power relations influence participation of individuals in governance programmes, this section will examine how power is conceptualised and debates on empowerment.

Different researchers have come up with different definitions in an attempt to conceptualize power. Hickey and Mohan (2004:34) define power as a network of social boundaries that delimit fields of possible action. To understand it, they suggest viewing how spaces are created, the places and levels of engagement and the degree and visibility of power within them. They argue that although power has traditionally been examined in its visible manifestations, it may as well be internalized in terms of one's values, self-esteem and identities such that voices in visible places. Quite often, these voices may be echoes of what the power holders who shaped those places want the people to hear. To counter this 'conventional wisdom', Hickey and Mohan propose that citizens should possess a sense of their own right or express opinions for exercising countervailing power against the ‘rules of the game’ that favour entrenched interests.

Power is also viewed in terms of how people stand in relation to each in everyday life as part of the systems which include family, state and the wider systematic economic relations (Nelson and Wright 1995:7). Closely related to this view is the analysis that uses status value theory to conceptualize power (Thye 2000). She defines power as the structural potential that can be exercised to extract resources. In her argument, power promotes unequal resource distribution favouring some actors at the expense of others based on status-ones standing in a social hierarchy as determined by respect, difference or social influence. Status theory targets groups whose members work collectively on the same task; when structural power is exercised, actors in high power locations accrue greater resources than actors in lower power locations” (Thye 2000: 409). This implies a ‘power over’ model (Rowlands 1995), suggesting that other people have control or influence over others. It is based on the view that if one party gained more power, it would act at the expense of others.

According to Nelson and Wright (1995), this phenomenon is reflected in observable conflicts where one party prevails over another and makes them do what they would not otherwise have done. Similarly, this form of power may be reflected when one party establishes barriers (political
values and institutional practices) which prevent others from voicing interests or taking the interests of dominant group as being “natural” hence the marginalized accepts them as the existing order of things (Nelson and Wright 1995: 9). Improving marginalized peoples capacity to challenge existing power relations has been subject of a number of studies (Rowlands 1995; Thye 2000; Moore 2001; Bode and Howes 2002; Nelson and Wright 1995). Empowerment is a fashionable term which conventionally relates to bringing people who are outside the decision making process into it. Rowlands (1995:102) defines empowerment as “a process by which people become aware of their own interests and how they relate to the interests of others in order to participate from a position of greater strength in decision making”. Rowlands points out that it involves much more than opening up access to decision making (power over) but also a process that leads people to feel that they are entitled to be part of the decision making process and actually influence decisions (power to).

Under the ‘power to’ model, Nelson and Wright (1995) have looked at individuals as undergoing or exercising power which then they can use to oppress others. To get out of this interaction, they suggest finding more spaces of control where by developing confidence and changing attitudes and behaviours, they can alter the power differentials in their relationships. Empowerment can also be viewed in terms on the new forms of citizen-state engagement. Hickey and Mohan (2004:30) argue that empowerment ranges from strengthening voices on one hand to strengthening receptivity to voices by institutions. To strengthen voices, they suggest raising awareness and building the capacity to mobilize through the following mechanisms:

- Government mandated forms of citizen participation
- Setting standards through which citizens may hold government accountable
- Various incentives for officials to be responsible to citizen voices
- Changes in organisational culture.

The widely held perception of empowerment implied in the United Nations development reports, improving the material status of the poor, has been contested in recent times. Instead Moore (2001:322) proposes the idea of visibly shaking the powerful. This may be done through national political systems that are effective and coherent so that they are a target for collective political action. Similarly, he views a system where governments implement programmes directed towards the poor as an incentive to mobilize them to obtain their entitlements. Moore proposes the following two tests of whether the poor are empowered: whether they are organised politically or the level to which local organisations are engaged in politics. The question arising from this is to what degree different social groups are engaged in politics? Moore cites a case in Uganda where parents coped with long periods of civil war and a fragile peace by taking control and financing their own primary schools. He argues; “where the state is ineffective, social movements are rare, weak, exclusive….improving their capacity may be the best way to stimulate effective organizations of the poor” (Moore 2001:326).

He argues that this could not be effective on a large scale and asserts that the kind of organization that can make consistent policy and affect a large population is characteristic of the state and the policies it pursues. Empowering marginalised people may involve processes through which claims to rights are accorded legitimacy (Bode and Howes 2002). When their rights are not
accorded legitimacy, the poor are sometimes forced to use desperate measures to challenge the structures of power including: individual sabotage of elites economic activity, collective forms of protest against the state, resistance e.g. reducing work output and gossip or character assassinations of elites thereby challenging the symbolic capital which forms part of their leadership portfolio. This suggests that the local social cultural conditions are important in creating an environment in which the rights can or cannot be claimed. Bode and Howes (2002) suggest that raising awareness of rights may be just as important as focussing on strategies that take advantage of or widen the political space in which forms of legitimate collective action are possible. Most of the literature exists on downward influence methods and leadership styles and it is possible to interpret every interaction and social relationship as involving power. In formal bureaucratic relationships for instance, power is often related with authority and because of that, decision makers in public administration are imprisoned by the old framework of hierarchical system in which they are reluctant to give any meaningful roles in decision making to subordinates for fear of undermining the system of authority (Petro de Abbreu 2002). However, governance is not only restricted to formal relations but it is also extensively reliant on informal relations. Hence power does not only stem from occupying official positions but also from the ability to create personal dependencies from mastering a client list form of politics (Hyden 2007). This scenario has also been reported in India where informal politics at village level manifests itself through patron-client relationships and informal networks in local governance institutions (Pur 2007). According to Pur, informal is a “set of institutions rooted in the notion of ‘tradionality’ and in local specific practices, which exercise public authority at local level through mechanisms distinctly different from those employed by formal state institutions” (p.413).

Hyden (2007) has provided interesting accounts on how informal power relations in Africa shape the capability, accountability and responsiveness of formal governance structures. He observes that formal institutions are weak and as a result, the injection of development aid has failed to achieve its intended outcomes. He further argues that this situation has contributed to the 750 million people living below one dollar a day, a figure that has remained static since 1990. A study in Indonesia (Dasgupta and Beard 2007: 233) found that at village level, power sharing arrangements, contestation between rival families and factions appear to be the norm and further noted that community governance is vulnerable to being taken over by elites because participants enter the process with unequal positions.

**Poverty**

Poverty is seen as a result of underdevelopment. This is because poverty is thought to be highly prevalent in the so called underdeveloped or least developed countries (LDCs) and less in developed countries. Poverty has been an issue of concern by governments around the world. The United Nations Millennium declaration in September 2000 stated; We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs are commitments made by 189 member countries of the United Nations in September 2000, committing themselves to making substantial progress towards the eradication of poverty and other human development goals by 2015 ( UNDP http:www.undp.org ).

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<th>Region</th>
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<td>Europe &amp; Central Asia</td>
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Who are the poor?

They are people that live in poverty. They live in households which have low social, political and psychological power.

- Social power- dealing with access to information, knowledge and skills, participation in social organisations and access to financial resources.
- Political power- dealing with access to the process by which decisions about their future are made
- Psychological power- dealing with a sense of individual potency or self confident behaviour

The understanding of the poor is often biased which leads to responses that are not helpful. The causes of biases in understanding the poor include:

- Conditioning- as a result of our own life experiences through working, studying etc
- Dominance- the desire to feel dominant over the others
- Distance- Differences in language, food and way of problem solving creates distance between poor and non-poor
- Denial- when the real world of the poor conflicts with who we are or what we believe, we often fall to denial and reframe or recompose our experience

Christian views of the poor:

- Poor as made in the image of God- draws on the creation narrative
- Poor as people in rebellion- draws on the fall as the reason why people are poor. They are lazy and make bad choices. Therefore they need to accept the gospel, go to work and make better choices. (Deuteronomy 28: 15-46)
- Poor as Gods favourites- the poor are oppressed by the social systems that keep them poor (2 Kings 4:1; Amos 2:6-7). The poor are the ones who are blessed, for theirs will be the kingdom. Sing to the Lord; Praise to the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers (Jeremiah 20:13)
- Poor as lost souls- reflects spiritual poverty. The poor are lost ...the poor need to be saved.
- The poor as devout, humble, honest and faithful people
Perspectives on poverty

This section provides different perspectives of understanding poverty and its manifestations.

- Poverty as a situation of being unable to or only barely able to meet the subsistence essentials of food clothing and shelter. This is poverty as a deficit. The perspective can also be extended to include deficit of knowledge and skills
- Poverty as a situation where the household is entangled in a cluster of disadvantage called a poverty trap. This trap is characterised by:
  - Material poverty-household has a few assets e.g. land and housing
  - Physical weakness- household members are weak/ lack strength. Sickness, childbearing and accidents reveals vulnerability
  - Isolation- household lacks access to services and information
  - Vulnerability- household has few buffers against emergencies or disaster. Vulnerability as defined by Moser (1998) is ‘insecurity and sensitivity in the well-being of individuals, households and communities in the face of a changing environment, and implicit in this, their responsiveness and resilience to risks that they face during such negative changes’. See table 1 below for how vulnerability can act as a poverty index.
  - Powerlessness- household lacks ability and knowledge to influence the around it. Therefore they exhibit an invitation to exploitation by the powerful. The exploitation occurs in many different forms key of which are;
    - Local non-poor trapping resources and benefits intended for the poor.
    - Local non-poor use blackmail and deception to rob who in turn lack recourse to justice
    - The poor are vulnerable when bargaining for their labour and non-poor
  - Spiritual poverty- household suffers from broken or dysfunctional relationships with God
- Poverty as lack of freedom to grow because of being trapped in a series of restrictions and limitations in four areas of life:
  - Mental-limited perspective mental blocks poor self image
  - Social- and spiritual. Behind these series of limitations is lies powerful stakeholders who have a stake in sustaining the illusion that the limitations can never be changed
- Poverty as lack of access to social power. Poverty is therefore characterised by a lack of social organization and lack of access to political process which is therefore a state of
disempowerment. Eight bases of social power available to the poor for creating social space and influence are;
  o Financial resources
  o Knowledge and skills
  o Information for self development
  o Instruments of work and livelihood
  o Surplus time
  o Social networks
  o Defensible life space
  o Social networks

- Poverty as an evil, a punishment from God for some fault or failure (Deuteronomy 28:15-46). Those who disobeyed the covenant would therefore be punished with poverty, short life and death. In proverbs 13:18; 20:13), poverty was also viewed as a result of laziness, idleness, and disobedience and disorderly.

Example of how Poverty is seen from the life of a youth in Nairobi. A youth in Kibera Slums in Nairobi described Poverty as: “Poverty is ME, Look at me! Look at my clothes, No job, No food, Am not in school and should I fall sick, I will not afford to go to hospital”

Inequality

Inequality refers to an unfair situation in which some people have more rights or better opportunities than other people. Inequalities refer to the differences in outcome for individuals in society. Inequalities of outcome – which may occur as a result of differences in individual endowments, or in the way people, are treated by institutions and other individuals. Inequality is about who gets what, how they get it, and why they get it.

Forms of Inequalities

There are various forms of inequalities which exist in the world today.

Gender Inequalities

Gender Inequality refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. Gender inequality is born out of the deepening division in the roles assigned to men and women, particularly in the economic, political and educational spheres. Gender inequalities manifest themselves through access to resources such as land, jobs; disparities in salaries, household roles, access to education among others.
Health Inequalities

Health inequalities can be defined as differences in health status or in the distribution of health determinants between different population groups and is related to access to health care. There is a major health inequality to people living in Northern part of Kenya as there are very few health facilities which are equipped with supplies and people have to walk long distances.

Education Inequalities

Educational inequality is the disparity that certain students experience in their education as compared to other students. The measures of educational success focus on grades, test scores, drop-out rates, college entrance numbers, and college completion rates. Education inequalities are brought about by issues such as marginalization of some areas/specific people, family background (poor or rich), race, educational infrastructure among others.

Income Inequalities

This refers to the unequal distribution of household or individual income across the various participants in an economy. Income inequality is often presented as the percentage of income to a percentage of population. For example, a statistic may indicate that 70% of a country's income is controlled by 20% of that country's residents. The causes of income inequality can vary significantly by region, gender, education and social status. This is evidenced by the widening gap between the rich and poor.

Ethnic (Racial/Tribal) Inequalities

Racial or tribal inequality is the result of hierarchical social distinctions between ethnic groups within a society and often established based on characteristics such as skin color and other physical characteristics or an individual’s place of origin or culture. Unequal treatment and opportunities between racial/tribal groups is usually the result of some ethnic groups being considered superior to others. This inequality can manifest through discriminatory hiring practices on job sites; in some cases, employers have been shown to prefer hiring potential employees based on the perceived ethnicity of a candidate’s given name - even if all they have to go by in their decision are resumes featuring identical qualifications.

Age Inequalities
Age discrimination is defined as the unfair treatment of people with regard to promotions, recruitment, resources, or privileges because of their age. It is also known as ageism: the stereotyping of and discrimination against individuals or groups based upon their age. It is a set of beliefs, attitudes, norms, and values used to justify age-based prejudice, discrimination, and subordination. One form of ageism is adultism, which is the discrimination against children and people under the legal adult age.

Causes of Inequalities

Various reviews have identified differences between individuals that may contribute to socio-economic inequalities in access to and use of services by people of all ages. Firstly, there are differences between individuals in their recognition or acceptance of the need for services. This is an important issue because seeking help late can result in poorer outcomes. Secondly, there are differences between individuals in their awareness and knowledge about the availability of services. People from lower socioeconomic groups are less likely to be aware that services exist and what those services offer. Thirdly, there are differences between individuals in their ability to make themselves heard and to navigate service systems. People from lower socio-economic groups are less able to do this and, as a result, receive fewer services that are tailored to their specific needs. In addition to the individual characteristics described above, there are factors relating to the professionals who provide services and systemic factors that may play a role in causing socio-economic inequalities in people’s access to and use of services.

Way Forward

To ensure transformation in power relations, social protection needs to be part of a social policy package, including free quality education, universal health care and basic labour rights, within a broad framework of civil and political, social and economic rights, there is need for various actors to adopt various strategies and actions which include;

- Understanding the forces that create inequalities and consequences of the inequalities
- Design and implement policies aimed at achieving social, economic and political justice and fairness
- Use the media to educate populations about the consequences of increasing inequalities
- Lobby local government agencies, leaders, to begin taking seriously determinants of inequalities approach, including consideration of the importance of economic inequality and poverty.
- Lobby governments to maintain the community and service structures that help to reduce inequalities.
- Contribute papers to academic and professional journals on developments on how to address inequalities.

**Equity**

Equity is about fairness; justness. Equity derives from a concept of social justice. Equity means that there should be a minimum level of income and environmental quality below which nobody falls. Generally, equity implies a need for fairness (not necessarily equality) in the distribution of gains and losses, and the entitlement of everyone to an acceptable quality and standard of living. It ensures that sufficiency and effective choices for all are pursued in ways that reduce dangerous gaps in sufficiency and opportunity (and health, security, social recognition, political influence, etc) between the rich and the poor.

Environmental inequalities already exist in all societies. Poorer people tend to suffer the burden of environmental problems more than others do. How? The concept of equity is well entrenched in international law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that the ‘recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world’.

**Two types of equity:**

*Intergenerational equity:* The idea of not reducing the ability of future generations to meet their needs – a more critical equity. Its about moral obligation to future generations as the unborn can have no say on decisions made today that affect them. From an environmental point of view, future generations should have the same ability to create wealth (from natural capital) as we have.

*Intra-generational equity:* This entails quity across communities and nations within one generation. It is a key SD principle as inequities are a cause of environmental degradation. Poverty deprives people of the choice about whether or not to be environmentally sound in their activities. The poor/hungry often will often destroy their immediate environment in order to survive. High levels of affluence also damaging to the environment – e.g. high levels
of consumption, which lead to resource depletion and waste accumulation – global warming
example Inequities also exist in the impacts of environmental policies and inequities in
decision making processes – e.g. measures to improve environmental problems may impact
more on some sectors of the community than others through imposing additional costs in
industries that then find they cannot compete internationally or by imposing additional costs
on individual companies who may have a cease business or reduce their workforce as a result.

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