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The Social Context of Development Cooperation†

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Development as a process launched within a society, by direct state and extra state agencies, in order to institute planned change within that society, and bring about a more equitable distribution of perceived facilities, has become one of the key concerns of governments of most Third World countries. This process has gained momentum within the context of the modern nation-states that emerged in the post colonial era. Experts engaged in the research which eventually leads to the planning and implementation of development schemes, invariably agree that a development scheme is likely to succeed if it answers the needs of a given society at a particular level of socio-economic development. Not all development schemes however, are geared towards catering to the needs of the societies they address. Although the pertinence of local institutions and cultures are now recognized as inalienable to the impact planned change is to have, the motivation to take local socio-economic conditions into account is invariably with the view of devising strategies that may ensure success of the programme intended, rather than the desire to explore existing potentials for resolving perceived inadequacies, on the basis of existing forms of social existence. Development agencies furthermore, inevitably have their particular thrust. The intervention of an agency in a society hence seeks to realize the potentials of that thrust, rather than meeting the priorities of the society in question for any meaningful effects of planned change. The specific fields into which the thrust of development is compartmentalized, has led to a dichotomy in development research between what is termed as social as opposed to economic development. Newman and Thomson (1989) have identified at least four ways of treating the relationship between economic growth and social development:

(i) One that sees social development as a by-product of economic growth;
(ii) Another that treats the two variables as unrelated;
(iii) A third which regards neither of the two variables as a primary condition of the other, but rather sees both as interdependent; and finally

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(iv) A fourth that considers social development a precedent to, rather than a result of economic growth.

On the basis of longitudinal data on 46 developing countries for the years 1960, 1970, and 1980 the authors have come to the conclusion that social development must precede economic growth for sustainable long-term benefits.

This paper seeks to comment upon the nature and thrust of a development agency in a particular society, on the one hand, and on the basis of a qualitative analysis of the findings of the study conducted for the implementation of the scheme, seeks to take a position with respect to the hypotheses identified by Newman and Thomson (1989) on the other.

THE DEVELOPMENT SCHEME PROPOSED BY FAO IN DISTRICT MUZAFFARABAD

In Investment Centre of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has proposed a development scheme in District Muzaffarabad, of the State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, in the north of Pakistan. The project focuses on the agricultural practices of the area. The main thrust of the project is on devising and implementing methods that seek to increase the productivity of the resources to which the population of the area has access. Since the prime thrust of the project is on increasing material production, the agency seeks to understand the criteria for socio-economic differentiation between households of the project area; the formal and informal institutions operative in the area that would be conducive and/or resistant towards implementation of proposed project components; and the priorities of the domestic units concerned in terms of the assistance FAO plans to provide for boosting production.

In order to determine these factors, a socio-economic study of the project area was conducted in June 1989. During the study, 45 households were interviewed in 14 villages. 10 of the households interviewed were perceived of by the indigenous population as belonging to the affluent class, 10 to the middle income, and 25 were poor. The largest representation was thereby given to the households that constitute the project's target group.

According to the preliminary findings of this study, the population of the area, excepting a few privileged households, was dependent on a limited resource base. The principal means of production were: land; livestock; and fruit trees. Produce from these resources, often in the case of most of the affluent households as well, was insufficient to meet domestic food requirements. The bulk of the population thus, was unable to subsist by the produce of the resources to which it had access. The deficiency in food requirements, left all economic classes of the area, heavily

dependent on extra-domestic sources of income. Income from these sources was subject to considerations of available domestic labour, opportunities, level of literacy, and required skills (see Table 1).

The sample of the study was not large enough, nor the interview technique followed adequate enough to reveal the rationale of the economic behaviour of the community. In addition, the data on the problems perceived by the community, and their priorities in case of project intervention, which ideally should have been the most important component of the study, even within the limited scope of the sample, was not comprehensive. Only 31 out of 45 households were questioned on the topic. No systematic format was moreover used to collect such data. It is not, therefore, certain whether the three investigators asked the same questions and consequently whether the informants understood the thrust and objectives of the project. In addition to the deficiencies of data, the analysis further suffers from a concentration on the intent of the project rather than the priorities of the community, and the significance of these priorities with reference to the existing socio-economic conditions. For instance, among the problems and facilities quoted as desirable for communal welfare, by the households that were questioned, were: improved and new road networks; village electrification; medical and veterinary facilities; formal schooling and training centres, etc. These facilities were seen as strategies with the potential of enhancing the chances of the coveted extra-domestic employment and thus making a contribution towards reducing food insufficiency by access to cash income. The FAO project however, did not cover these issues. It focused, instead, on increasing the productivity of the limited resources to which households of the community had access.

The project area is one of the poorest in the region. The per-capita income of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, in 1980 was US $ 140 as compared to Pakistan's average, at that time, of US $ 320. The terrain is characterized by high mountainous ranges with little agricultural and insufficient or overused grazing land. The average size of land (cultivable and uncultivable) held by the poor households for instance, was 7.4 *Kanals* (or 0.37 ha), while the average holding of the middle income and the affluent households was 15 *Kanals* (or 0.75 ha), and 35 *Kanals* (or 1.7 ha) respectively. The bulk of the area is snowbound for almost half the year, which reduces and often completely blocks, mobility in winter. The severe weather and infertile ecological conditions reduce the resource base and potential extra-domestic employment to a minimum for the bulk of the population. Given the small resource base, the infertility of the soil, (with the size of land diminishing at every generation), and the severe weather conditions in the area, the bulk of the population is unable to subsist by the produce of the resources to which it has access. Out of the sample of 45 there was only 1 household (belonging to the middle-income group) that reported food self-sufficiency from the produce of the resources to which it had

Table 1

Percentage of Household Resources by Economic Strata

Economic Strata	No. of Cases	HH Size	Extra-domestic Income	Livestock	Fruit Trees		Indebtedness by Source		
					Non-bearing	Bearing	Bank	Shop-keepers	Villagers
Affluent	10	151	68.3	53.1	54.7	22.6	50.0	4.0	5.55
Middle-income	10	86	17.9	21.6	26.9	55.5	50.0	12.0	11.10
Poor	25	213	13.7	25.3	18.4	21.9	0.0	84.0	83.33
Total	45	450	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

access.

Ideally a development project should not only study local conditions to determine potentials for implementation of the project thrust, but it should also incorporate a combination of all components pertinent to the society being addressed whether these components fall within the realm of what is termed as social as opposed to economic development. The FAO scheme, did not take local conditions into account in their own right. Moreover, perhaps not intentionally, but effectively, the scheme presumes either the economic and social variables to be unrelated (so that concentration on increasing agricultural productivity can be justified with the expectancy that the agencies involved in social development will do their share), or (by focusing on economic growth) the scheme assumes that social development will follow as a by-product of economic growth. The data generated by the study, although faulty, distinctly indicates economic and social development to be related only in so far as social development must become a precondition of economic growth.

Given the social and ecological conditions of the Muzaffarabad District, increased productivity of available resources is not likely to have any significant impact on the ability of the population of the area to subsist on the natural resources to which it has access. The average accessible size of cultivable and uncultivable land for households belonging to all economic strata is 19 *Kanals* (or 0.94 ha). The size of this land is furthermore, diminishing not only by environmental hazards such as erosion, but also by its equal distribution, at every generation among the sons, and occasional partial distribution between the daughters (who are entitled to one-third of their brother's share, and who may, at the time of marriage or subsequently claim their share for house construction and/or cultivation, although they rarely do so). Fodder is the most scarce and expensive commodity in the project area (given the limited sources of its extraction, and the labour expended in its acquisition). Livestock ownership on the other hand, is directly related to a household's propensity to acquire sufficient fodder, either by access to green maize thinnings, crop residues, weeds, grazing and hay cutting on uncultivable lands and edges of cropped fields, or through purchase. The size of owned and communal (*milkiat* and *shamlat*) land to which a household has access, in addition to availability of grazing rights over state land (under the jurisdiction of the revenue and forest departments), therefore determines the size of livestock a household can raise. Rights over the size of land accessible in turn are related to the social class to which households belong, and their ability of having established rights over cultivable and uncultivable land at the time of their settlement due to their social position in the area. Fruit trees have the potential of contributing significantly to household food requirements and generating income through sale of surplus. However, the incidence of the number and produce of bearing fruit trees is so low and

infrequent that this parameter in general, cannot under existing conditions, be considered pertinent to household economy. Even where diseases are controlled and productivity increased, in order to succeed, the fruit tree component would have to include the development of a market infrastructure that could ensure the sale of surplus fruit, which at present is lost for the lack of proper marketing facilities.

Improved health, education and communication facilities, or facilities of potable water and electrification are not likely to become eventually available simply, by increasing the productivity of the limited resources to which households of the area have access. Where project benefits are restricted to increasing the productivity of the limited and ever-decreasing natural resources to which the bulk of the households of the area have access, and where these benefits are moreover directed primarily towards the poorest strata of the area, the result is only nominally likely to affect subsistence by available natural resources for households of the target group. Aspects of the so-called social development (such as modern health, formal education/training, and communication facilities etc.) is not provided for either directly or indirectly within this scheme. Since extra-domestic employment is the only reliable source of income all the year round, for all economic strata of the area, the incidence of temporary migration towards urban centres is very high (83 percent of the housholds in the sample reported one or more members of their household migrating seasonally and/or periodically in search of extra-domestic employment). The facilities envisaged by FAO do not seek to, nor are likely to check, this trend because there is no provision for creating local employment opportunities. The privileged few who are able to make ends meet by income from domestic and extra-domestic sources, have neither the resources nor the motivation to provide communally desired facilities, and there is no potential for the realization of these facilities as a result of an increase in the produce of the resources of the less privileged saught by FAO. As elected representatives of the area perhaps, (a factor unrelated to the FAO thrust), the privileged few are more likely to press for communal facilities because they themselves expect to benefit two-fold in so doing, and in the event of their institution.

CONCLUSIONS

Development experts tend to work with *a priori* notions of development. These notions are judged beneficial for the societies they address without actual reference the rationale of the socio-economic conditions of those societies. Each development agency moreover, has its particular thrust which it seeks to implement in the target society. The local structure of the society in question is studied in order to provide information that might permit manipulation of the system, by

devising strategies that seek to overcome resistance and so-called hindrances from local institutions and cultures for project implementation. This method and approach is somewhat like putting the cart before the horse. If development is to be balanced and meaningful, a more appropriate approach would be to study local conditions first, with the view of establishing local reasoning and potentials for development within the society. On the basis of the problems and priorities perceived by the community, if a model is subsequently designed to conform to existing potentials (whether these incorporate components of economic growth, so-called social development, or both) the project is not only likely to be successful, but would also attribute the necessary importance to local conditions in their own right rather than with reference to alien systems, which the target societies may never replicate, because of the different geo-historical and cultural conditions in these societies. Such an approach requires not only cooperation between experts of different disciplines but also cooperation between representatives of different development agencies.

Given moreover, the interpersonal nature of the face to face kinship and communal relationships which function as relations of production in societies of the Third World, social relations in these societies are not distinct from economic relations. Social development, therefore, cannot be isolated from economic development. These variables are neither unrelated, nor is the former variable likely to follow as a by-product of the latter. The interdependence of the two variables however, is not mutually equitable. Rather, the dependence of economic growth on social development, makes the latter a necessary prerequisite of the former.

REFERENCE

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