





Abstract

Exclusive private sector-initiated or poorly planned government-led socio-economic policies have largely accounted for rural community destabilisation and disorientation in many African countries. Previously, colonial governments established elitist and exploitative land-intensive projects which became major disruptive phenomena in rural communities in the occupied African colonies. History has shown that exclusive socio-economic policies unsettle rural communities and are predominantly unpopular for upsetting cultural and socio-religious practices. In the majority of cases such policies are largely responsible for the violation of established rural justice systems and dependable livelihoods. In some instances, communal displacements result in low regard for, and gross breaches of, fundamental human rights by state and non-state developers. Ironically, architects of such projects often adopt and deploy the rhetoric of developing or modernising rural communities. However, in independent Zimbabwe, as in most independent African countries, there has been very little change in approach in rural development strategies. Post-independence state and private sector-sponsored development projects have continued to haunt rural communities. By way of multidisciplinary and qualitative approaches, this paper reflects on the moral issues associated with development-related displacements and unplanned resettlements, arguing that the traditional exclusive approach to rural development has hardly improved communal people's welfare. The paper further explores communal people's narratives emanating from impressive public-private-partnership development projects that are premised on exclusive and elitist strategies. Finally, it suggests a paradigm shift in rural community development policies for the sustainability of Africa's future rural communities.

Key words/ phrases: Development; Ethics; Development projects; Development-related displacement; resettlement; rural community.

Introduction

For many people and communities, development is closely linked to the idea of progress. It has been the mark of generational advancement from time immemorial. To this end, various societies the world over have been identified as developed, developing or underdeveloped. The rhetoric is that the path to a developed society has been through development projects that have transformed the socio-economic, political as well as cultural landscape of many a community. Paradoxically, planners of displacements and resettlement programmes often adopt and deploy the rhetoric of what Crocker (2008) calls high modernism. The ideology of high modernism leads to an overriding belief in the authority and power of scientific knowledge to improve the human condition through the establishment of state-sanctioned technical and social engineering projects such as dams, the spatial reconfiguration of cities, the reorganization of forests and resettlement schemes. In essence high modernism implies a





radical disjuncture with history and tradition. Its temporal focus is almost exclusively on a scientifically transformed and better society. In the context of colonial Zimbabwe's multiple histories of race and power-laden spatial dislocations, land disposessions for purposes of establishing development projects generated a broad corpus of literature. However, development projects often involve the introduction of direct control by a developer over land previously occupied by another group. Therefore, as Furtado (1971) argues, the way in which progress is quantified, whether through economic, social or ethical justifications, determines the way in which people conceptualize development. Ethical issues are similarly ambiguous, although this arises from the sheer diversity of moral justifications for development-induced displacements that take place in different parts of the world today. Consequently, the relationship between development and ethics is emotively complex. It is so inconsistent that it eludes simple definition. Nevertheless, since the first missionary endeavours of the colonial era in Africa, development ethics have, for better or worse, always been involved whenever a development project was established. This paper explores the moral issues associated with development-induced displacements and rural resettlement in general. It provides the communal narratives emanating from grand state-sponsored development projects, arguing that as long as the establishment of development projects is a top-down imposition in rural areas, it remains morally impermissible.

Obsolete Rural Development approaches

In the early 1980s, building upon earlier approaches that dealt primarily with the processes of voluntary resettlement, various African governments, as outlined by Glover (1995) proposed a four-stage model of how people and socio-cultural systems should respond to the need for development-related displacement. The stages were labelled conscription, transition, potential development and handing over or integration. In the conscription phase, policy-makers and/or developers formulate development, displacement and resettlement plans, often without informing those to be displaced. During transition, people learn about their future displacement from the powers-that-be and this causes anxiety and heightens rural people's levels of stress. However, any development, if ever it comes, will occur only if the physical relocation of the local people has occurred smoothly. The displaced persons begin the process of rebuilding their economy, political and social networks from a point of disorientation. Handing over or integration refers to the entrustment of local production systems and community leadership and management to a second generation of residents that identifies with and feels at home in the new community. Once this stage has been achieved, resettlement and relocation is deemed a success.

However, these models focused on the different behavioural tendencies common to each of a series of stages through which the resettled persons passed. At first, the models were formulated to explain the stages of voluntary settlement, and they were only later applied to





some cases of involuntary resettlement, that is, those ‘successful’ cases that passed through all the four stages.

In Zimbabwe, following its independence in 1980 and throughout the 1990s, the mounting evidence of involuntary resettlement schemes that failed to pass through all four stages suggested above demonstrated that new models were necessary to explain the consequences of involuntary displacement. In particular, it was recognized that a new theory was necessary to explain what was increasingly being seen as predictable impoverishment in forced relocation and resettlement schemes, just as was the case during the pre-independence epoch. As a result, Goulet (1998) suggested the Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction (IRR) model which worked in the 1990s in response to the need for a model that was less violent to the affected communities. In contrast to the earlier models, the IRR model did not attempt to identify different responses to rural displacements, but rather aimed to identify the impoverishment risks intrinsic to forced resettlement and the processes necessary for reconstructing sustainable livelihoods of the displaced communities. In particular, it stressed that, unless specifically addressed by targeted indigenous or through home-grown, locally-based policies, forced displacement can cause impoverishment among the displaced by bringing about landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, loss of access to common property resources, increased morbidity and mortality and community dislodgment. To these risks Hardman and Midgely (1981) added the following disadvantages: loss of access to public services, disruption of formal educational activities for children and the loss of civil and human rights. The IRR model also recognized risks to the host population which, while not identical to those of the displaced, can also result in impoverishment. Not all of these processes necessarily occur in each case of forced resettlement and not all displaced households are necessarily affected in the same way by each process. Rather, the model noted that, when taken together, these processes capture the reasons behind many failed resettlement programmes.

The IRR model has been used as a framework for a number of studies. For example, Gunatilleke et al (1983) use the model to examine India’s experience with involuntary resettlements from 1947 to 1997, examining each of the IRR risks in turn. In his study, Gasper (2004) employs the model to analyse resettlement operations in two Indian projects – the Upper Indravati Hydroelectric Project and the Orissa Water Resources Consolidation Project. Again, Quarles and Giri (2003) look specifically at land-based resettlement strategies in African dam projects, arguing that such strategies must include not only land on which to resettle, but also common land, adequate productive farmland, full title deeds for land (rather than tenant arrangements), and resettler-directed, instead of top-down imposed development schemes and projects.





Global Characteristics of Rural Areas

Throughout the world, rural areas tend to have similar characteristics. For example, rural populations are spatially dispersed. Agriculture is often the dominant, and sometimes the exclusive, economic sector and opportunities for resource mobilisation are limited. These characteristics mean that people living in rural areas face a set of factors that pose major challenges to development. The spatial dispersion of rural populations often increases the cost and difficulty of providing rural goods and services effectively. The specific economic conditions in rural areas result in fewer opportunities than in non-rural locations.

Consequently, the tax base is limited, so rural areas are rarely able to mobilise sufficient resources to finance their own development projects, leaving them dependent on transfers from the centre. Factor markets in

rural areas often operate imperfectly, rendering the search for efficient outcomes an extremely challenging

one. Furthermore, rural areas are often politically marginalised, leaving little opportunity for the rural poor to

influence government policies.

Sustainable Rural Development: The Zimbabwe Context

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country whose land area measures about 390 757 square kilometres. Of this area of land, 85% is for agricultural purposes while the rest comprises national parks, state forests and urban land. The country's population is estimated at about 14 million, with a sizable number of citizens residing outside the country owing to serious economic decline between the years 2000 and 2008.

Nevertheless, the country recorded some positives during its post-independence years. At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe had a dual economy, inherited from its colonial past. It was characterized by "... a relatively well-developed modern sector and a largely rural sector that employed about 80% of the labour force. The newly independent government sought to address some of these inequalities..." (Government of Zimbabwe, 2004: 11). The new government gave priority to the reduction of poverty and government geared its spending towards increased "... social sector expenditures, expansion of rural infrastructure and redressing social and economic inequality including land reform." (ibid, 2004: 11).

The concept of 'development' is regarded as both 'specific' and 'diffuse'. It is regarded as specific in that a people needing development would ordinarily be knowledgeable about the state of their level of sophistication and accordingly prioritise their problems and solutions to them. Similarly, development is diffuse in that it "... is not a state or a condition in which people merely explain or define what they want to have" (Mararike, 1995: 11).





Generally, ‘development’ is a term that can be used to describe the growth of humans throughout their lifespan, from conception to death. According to Hardman and Midgely (1981), the scientific study of human development seeks to understand and explain how and why people change throughout life and this includes all aspects of human growth including physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and perceptual and personality development. Development for Adger (2009), however, does not just involve the biological and physical aspects of growth, but also its cognitive, ethical and social aspects. In this article we acknowledge that there is no unanimity over the meaning of the concept of development. Thus we argue that development should represent human growth in all aspects of life. In our view, ‘development’ should be considered as the process in which human beings experience abundant life and have their liberties upheld. We further contend that, ‘development’ suggests that citizens are meeting their basic needs (food, clothing and shelter) as well as their higher needs (emotional, aesthetic and intellectual). Although indices of development remain contentious, this article argues that it is possible to identify the absence of development. Where there is no development, there is poverty, oppression and general discontent.

However, the idea of development is as controversial as it is relative to different communities. To develop is to grow. Growth, be it in stature, configuration or competence, therefore, becomes the measure of most forms of development. Development is the outcome of the process of growth. It is as natural as much as it can be induced. It goes without saying then that development is closely linked to the concept, and it is the mark, of progress and increase in social values. This conception of development implies that development is desirable to any person because it brings with it increase in both quantity and quality of life. Thus, development improves, or it is the process of improving the quality of the life lived by those experiencing and affected by it. This is to say that development aims at the human common good.

Are Development Projects ‘Necessary Evils’?

When development is conceived of as given in the above perspective it becomes attractive and readily acceptable. Every community would clamour to go through some form of development for the improvement of the quality of life of its members. However, development is only possible, at least in the majority of cases, through the route of development projects. A development project is a scheme or plan to be undertaken in a community so that when the scheme is completed the local people’s welfare is improved. A development project, therefore, aims to improve the local people’s way of life. Nevertheless, most development projects often involve the introduction of direct control by a developer over land previously occupied by another group. For example, some development projects such as natural resource extraction, urban area expansion, industrial parks, and infrastructure constructions (e.g. highways, bridges, irrigation schemes and dams) all require large tracts of land. This means that, in order to pave way for development, people have to be moved away





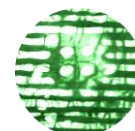
from such land. On the other hand, when indigenous communities are alienated from their lands because of development, they are often left to scrape an existence on the margins of society. This is certainly not a sign of development. Many such projects result in human rights violations involving forced evictions, displacement and even loss of life when social unrest and conflict over natural resources control and expropriation erupt. This is certainly not what we conceived as development. Natural resource extraction projects such as farming are land and water-intensive and often directly affect the collective rights of indigenous peoples to their lands and territories. All too often we see conflict between corporations, indigenous peoples and the State over development projects which are initiated without proper consultation or the consent of the very people who are dispossessed of their land. What, then, is the purpose or function of a development project when it results in the destabilization of communities which are supposed to be developed? Or, are development project necessary evils?

Development Ethics /Morality In Perspective

The word *ethics* refers to a discipline, that is, the study of values, traditions and actions and their justification. It also refers to the subject matter of that discipline, the actual values and rules of conduct by which people live (Solomon, 1993: 57). Thus, on the one hand, ethics includes the whole garment of acceptable social and personal practices ranging from the rules of conduct to the institutions that govern the kind of work and how people do it. In this case, ethics refers to the general science which enquires into the meaning and purpose of life and conduct. Esquith and Gifford (2009) also observe that ethics represents a systematic attempt at considering the purposeful actions of mankind, to determine their rightness or wrongness, their tendency to good or evil. On the other hand, morality is a subset of ethics. It is more specific, particularly significant and transcends boundaries of any particular culture or situation. Thus, the distinction between ethics and morality (ethics as the whole of our sense of self and our place in society and morality as the core, universal and most sacrosanct rules in any society) is not always followed in general conversations and philosophical discourses. To that effect, in this paper the words ‘ethics’ and ‘morality’ are used interchangeably.

Development-Induced Displacement: An Oxymoron

The implication of the preceding part is that the displacement of people by development projects that are imposed on rural communities is morally objectionable and that it should be prevented because it does the opposite of what development means and seeks to achieve. In this paper we argue that displacing people for development purposes is morally objectionable. We notice that the phrase *development-induced displacement* is, in fact, an oxymoron in that it implies, on the one hand ‘development’ meaning progress or improvement of the affected people’s livelihoods. But, on the other hand, there is ‘displacement’ which points to the destabilization, disorientation and disruption of the same rural communities and rural people’s livelihoods. So, how do we handle this paradox? This question comes from the two





diametrically opposed orientations imbedded in the oxymoron itself. The first argues that economic advancement (development) has always meant that the landscape of production and distribution is changed and people are often obligated to move or relocate to make this possible. It also claims that people need to learn to adjust and, perhaps, that they should be helped to adjust and become accustomed to their new settings. It further claims that displacement has been ubiquitous in all forms of development-related paradigms, whether capitalist or socialist. In fact, Hamelink (1997) maintains that displacement reflects mobility and as such it is the opposite of immobility or the idea of being trapped in a particular place. In Shona sagacity (a Zimbabwean local language), the proverb *Chitsva chiri murutsoka* (A new thing lies in the foot) implies that good things often come from movement or relocation. This is a proverb that expresses the fact that mobility is desirable for it brings about progress while immobility is not because it does not. Again, mobility indicates freedom while immobility denotes lack of freedom. In any case, the argument concludes, as long as development serves the public interest or the common good, then there are no ethical issues implied.

It is important, however, to note that the above position represents a form of developmentalism that is morally naive in that it treats only the ends of development as involving moral judgments, excluding the means, the processes. Thus, it allows the treatment of persons as means to a desired end, contradicting Kant's Categorical Imperative provisions which veto against the treatment of persons as means to any end.

The other orientation that would short-circuit an ethical analysis is the opposite of the first. It is no less one-dimensional morally. According to this perspective, the displacement of people is ethically unacceptable and so are any development projects and policies that lead to it. But, this line of argument ignores the justifications that can and have been offered for development-induced displacement. Simplistic morality, whether pro- or anti-development, is disagreeable. In the end, our position is that both the means of development and their justifications require ethical appraisal.

The top-down approach to establishing development projects has often resulted in community displacements, disorientation and conflicts between developers and those required to make way for development projects. It is this approach that has given rise to so much resistance to the establishment of development projects in a number of rural areas in African communities including Zimbabwe. The socio-ethical sources of this resistance are attached to the local people's concept of land ownership. In this regard, Verstraelen (1998: 18) observes that:

The land forms a close and enduring bond between the living and the dead: through their control of the fertility of the land they once cultivated, the spirits are believed to continue to care for their descendants and the descendants are forced to remember and honour their ancestors.





Thus, for many Africans, the land symbolises belonging, connectedness and continuity. In support of this conception of land use and importance for rural people in Zimbabwe, Bakare (1993: 45) has this to say:

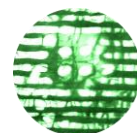
Land (house) is a place of connection with mother earth, where one's roots are, where one's umbilical cord has been buried, where one's ancestors are deposited, a place of connection and orientation. To sum up, land for Zimbabweans consists of things that can be qualified and not quantified. It offers them identity, a livelihood and it is sacred.

The above conception of land therefore makes it difficult if not impossible to simply ask the rural people to leave their pieces of land to create space for the establishment of a development project imposed on them.

Moral Convulsions From Development-Induced Displacements

The initial impermissible moral import of development-induced displacement resides in its very definition. To displace people means to force them to leave their home, village, town, region or country for another place in order to create space for something else, in this case a development project. To the extent that any form of coercion is morally objectionable, so is displacement, too. Moreover, displacing people usually involves harming them emotionally, socially and economically, even when some form of compensation is made. In the majority of cases displaced persons lose their productive land, livelihoods, established social networks and the cultural and moral patterns contained in their day-to-day lives. The whole environment from which they would have accumulated extensive experience and knowledge, to single out the most basic possessions, is also taken away. Thus, apart from the moral objection to coercion, there is the further objection to harming people in ways other than contravening their wishes and commitments. Harming others for any reason including development, is morally objectionable. To this effect, Quarles and Giri (2003) observe that development projects have the tendency of making some people from outside the development project area get the gains while the local people get the pains. In this regard, it is morally repulsive to see that development projects create pain for the local community people.

It is important to state that for many years, development-induced displacements have posed ethical humiliations and challenges for many post-independence African governments. One reason could be that the effects of development-induced displacements can be so clearly distressing, overshadowing the projected gains of the same development projects in general. Gunatilleke et al (1983) have clearly captured the paradox thus: whereas development projects are intended to raise the people's well-being and reduce poverty, their effect on displaced populations is often impoverishment, disorientation and disillusionment.





New Approaches (Paradigms) To Rural Development

Worldwide, the pervasiveness of poverty and poor delivery of basic services in rural areas of developing countries continue to constrain development efforts. The prevalence of rural poverty provides major challenges to governments, civil society organisation and developmental agencies. The failure of many rural development projects during the last three decades has led those involved to consider in more detail the factors that undermined successful outcomes. Prime among these are the issues of inadequate local capacity and the excessive centralisation of decision-making, leading to the imposition of development projects on rural communities.

As part of a global phenomenon, many developing countries are now discovering that rural (and urban) communities, if appropriately consulted and empowered, can often manage their own local development efforts and sometimes considerably better than any agency of the state. A properly worked through system of participation and decentralisation holds the promise to provide mechanisms for empowering communities appropriately, though this process is by no means guaranteed.

In most cases decentralisation is often espoused in principle but undermined in fact by institutional arrangements and financial flows that fail to allow communities to articulate and act on their priorities. While it is true that rural local authorities are unlikely, initially, to be able to take on some of the more sophisticated functions associated with decentralisation, the gains to rural populations, often ignored and effectively disenfranchised by their urban counterparts, are potentially substantial and worthy of closer scrutiny. It is clear that rural areas stand to benefit just as much, and often proportionately more than urban areas from initiatives designed to build the capacity of local governments to manage their own affairs and empower local communities to take responsibility for their own local development projects and programmes.

As policy-makers increasingly recognise the importance of the interrelationships between political, economic and social reforms, so they are discovering that processes of decentralisation offer a mechanism through which these reforms can be carried out systematically and in parallel. Decentralisation efforts are often accompanied by a broader interest in building more general principles of local empowerment, which include efforts to improve accountability of sub-national governments to their electorates; to increase transparency in their operations; to build more democratic systems of election; to promote greater fiscal autonomy for local authorities; and to build social capital in communities.

Zimbabwe Rural Communities And Development

For many years, efforts to extend the benefits of development to rural communities have often taken a government-based approach. This approach aimed to tackle rural poverty in a cross-





sectoral manner through rural development projects and programmes. But the mixed experiences with rural development projects in Zimbabwe have led to the need for the crafting of a detailed evaluation, which, among other things, highlights the failure to involve local people properly in a participatory process and the failure to build capacity as major shortcomings. In addition, an overly centralised, blue-print or bureaucratic approach to project design has left implementation agencies unable to respond to the demands of local people. Two rural areas of Marange in Mutare south and Chisumbanje in Chipinge are cases in point. The Marange rural area is home to the world's finest alluvial diamonds and mining there by government and private companies has led to the relocation of thousands of local people elsewhere. In Chisumbanje, a world class ethanol plant was established through a public-private-partnership arrangement that did not take any local rural people on board. Although the government tried to come up with community share-holder schemes to benefit the locals, most of the companies involved do not respect these arrangements and this has left the local people poorer.

In our opinion, the new approach that we think can work to benefit rural communities adequately in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa is decentralisation. African governments should not always dictate the nature, size and extent of development projects for any particular rural community, nor should any government hijack developmental potentialities for the benefit of the central government itself. In line with this approach, Hardman and Midgely (1981) suggest that for a decentralised system to work effectively, co-operation is required at the local level between formal governmental institutions and the range of less formal non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs). The involvement of NGOs and CBOs, as well as rural community individuals themselves, is increasingly being seen as an indispensable part of a participatory process that fosters consensus building. It is at the interface between these formal and informal institutions that the practical implementation of decentralisation effectively takes place.

However, NGOs and other CBOs that lack managerial capacity or, alternatively, focus on furthering their organisation's own ends at the expense of the broader community will undermine successful outcomes. It is important to note that improved capacity will not, on its own, solve all the shortcomings because the overall environment in which development projects take place is also important. Capacity-building efforts that are carried out in highly centralised systems soon run into limits related to central constraints. Capacity enhancement and devolution of functions must be pursued together and paced to complement each other.

Decentralisation of fiscal and investment decision-making from national to provincial and local governments also contributes to more efficient decision-making regarding investments and to the more efficient implementation of projects. Decentralisation of resource allocation and investment decisions to municipalities and communities should be accompanied by a clearly defined and well-disseminated system of incentives and penalties to discourage the





misuse of funds. However, decentralisation without explicit efforts to strengthen rural institutions and enhance participation of rural people carries a high danger of urban bias and prolonged rural incapacitation. In the early stages of decentralisation when urban and rural constituencies face a level playing field, urban residents tend to carry off most of the benefits because they have more players and master the game quickly. The danger is that rural communities end up providing space and resources for urban institution developments.

Recommendations

When programmes are intended to benefit the poor or previously disadvantaged people, targeting mechanisms should be simple, explicit and monitorable. They should, moreover, be based on objective criteria, should foster transparency and minimise political interference in resource allocation. Identifying clear criteria simplifies the task of designing systems of monitoring to ensure that project resources do reach the poorest communities.

Beneficiaries' own participation in the financing of development projects generates a sense of ownership and a willingness to share responsibility for the future operation and maintenance of investments. This finding has been confirmed in Latin America and is reported in the most recent review of successful land reform projects in Zimbabwe. Beneficiary participation in the selection, execution, supervision and financing of project investments ensures that investments respond to true, perceived needs and generates cost savings and increased accountability at the local level. Participation in priority setting and design of projects enhances organisation, either of the community, group or even the household and heightens awareness of available programmes and services. It also facilitates rural people's participation and increases the cost-effectiveness of the development project. Investments have greater sustainability when the municipalities, communities, and/or households contribute to financing in a cost-sharing arrangement and when there is increased beneficiary participation. Sustainability is also promoted when communities, in themselves, assume greater responsibilities and influence public investment expenditure at the local level.

A widely disseminated and carefully designed information campaign is essential to ensure transparency and assurance that local community people receive proper knowledge concerning the development project's objectives and contents. Technical assistance and training should be available and accessible to rural communities to enable them to identify, prepare and implement their own development projects.

Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that the ethics of development needs to be revisited in order to make the best of development projects for local people in rural areas. We have contended that development ethics, as a discipline, means to represent the quest for a new strategic approach to the establishment of sustainable development projects in African countries. It also emerged





that the orthodox claims by developers that they mean to uplift community welfare through development projects no longer works. It has been argued that very often in discussions of sustainable livelihoods a set of ideas about bottom-up, locally-led, participatory development dovetails with livelihoods analyses agendas. The paper has maintained and advanced the position that development projects should be established to benefit the local people without taking them away from their areas. We have also questioned the morality of development projects when they become a platform for political muscle-flexing between political parties. For instance, the Chisumbanje ethanol project produced serious political interference to the extent that local people resisting displacement without compensation were considered ‘anti-progressive opposition party members’ and they have been subjected to both emotional and physical violence. In light of the foregoing, we call for the reconfiguration of development projects’ implementation so that they do not become a source of moral problems for the local people.

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