

Pan – Africanism and African Renaissance
The Co-operative Movement and Development in Africa

By

Suleman A. Chambo

Maulid Bwabo

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INTRODUCTION

Africa is one of the historically troubled continents which started the process of becoming independent fifty six years ago. But the co-operative enterprise had earlier, and it is the co-operative movement which gave material and moral support the political independence struggle so Africa has had a long history of slavery, colonialism, neo colonialism and the current globalization. In all these epochs of history, Africa has and is standing on a disadvantaged position. During the slave trade, Africa lost millions of its human resource capacity to America and Europe. During the colonial period, Africa was tied to the industrialized countries where they were posed to produce what they did not consume and consumed what they did not produce. After political independence, Africa continues to serve the international capitalist system with agricultural raw material, cheap labour and minerals under a new world system known as globalization. By its very nature, globalization is a capitalistic guided economic system which gradually marginalizes Africa of its resources, economy and produces uneven development.

But African countries are politically independent and hence as independent countries, there was a need to develop an institutional mechanism for bringing together African co-operation and

solidarity as a continent. That institutional framework, was known as the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The OAU, was later transformed into the African Union, (AU). The AU was formed after all African countries had assumed their political independence opening a new chapter of building Africa, in economic and social terms. As a Pan Africanist organization, the African Union, has economic, political and piece keeping objectives. But for this presentation, we are going to focus on the economic objectives. Those economic objectives are mainly two and are stated as follows:

- To promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels
- To promote cooperation in all fields of economic activity to raise the standards of all African peoples.

A general synthesis of the two economic objectives of the African Union, we observe a lot of congruence with the definition of a co-operative enterprise. According to the ICA (1995) a co-operative is an autonomous association of persons, united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise. The co-operative enterprise promotes economic, social and cultural aspirations. A co-operative enterprise can be formed in any field of human activity provided it is legalized. We also note that although the co-operative enterprise was introduced in the African economy more than seventy years earlier than the African Union, we see objective similarities of their existence. We can therefore draw an important congruence here that the co-operative movement is an independent variable influencing the rate of economic development in Africa. The co-operative movement, has another important message to the development of Africa. According to Todaro and Smith (2006), development values of sustenance, self esteem and freedom from servitude, are all

In this presentation, we are going to develop the relationship between co-operative development and economic development in Africa and focus on the following issues; First we shall take a brief history of the rise of the co-operative movement and its potential for African development. Secondly, we will look at some salient features of the African economy characterizing the central problem. In the fourth section, we will look at the co-operative movement as source of the solution to some of the critical economic and social problems of the continent. In the fifth section, we will

look at the Africa Union and the integration capacity of the co-operative movement and in the sixth section, we look at the way forward. Finally, we make our conclusion

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE RISE OF THE MODERN CO-OPERATIVE ENTERPRISE IN AFRICA

Africa, had its own communities with its own cultures, social systems, values and economic structures. One of the aspects of the economy of African countries before colonization, is traditional co-operation where societies shared labour participation in production activities (Craig, 1965) Traditional cooperation was cultural and did not have any reward system. Modern co-operation was an import from the experience Of European working people who wanted to organize their economic undertakings outside an exploitative capitalist system. Modern co-operation, commonly known as contractual cooperation, came through different traditions depending on the colonial power that came into existence (Wanyama et al,2008). Those coming under British rule, adapted the British based unified co-operative model, organized at different tiers from primaries, secondary unions, apexes and federations but each tier, maintaining its legal personality. Those coming under France and Spain, took the social economy model where co-operatives are seen as legal institutions bringing together, people, sharing same social and economic objectives. The Belgians, held the social movement perspective where an interest group such as trade unions, women's ' movement or farmers organizations, set up co-operatives as instruments for collective action. But for Portuguese Africa, the co-operative movement was taken as an organization of agricultural producers and an instrument of individual rural entrepreneurs.

Those received models of co-operation, have differences and as such, they have had different impacts on the economy of Africa and here we just indicate three important distinctions in order to aid analysis,

First, the Unified British model, has national and international structures. The International Co-operative Alliance, is a manifestation of the unified model. The other models are very local and do not have any national or international structures. Secondly, the unified model is vertically coordinated, but weak in term of its horizontal networking. The other models are strong in horizontal networking and weak in vertical integration. Thirdly, the unified model has structure which can navigate international negotiations while the others do not have such structures. Lastly, the unified model has a critical education and research institutions at national levels while the others do not have clear education and training structures.

Member countries of the African Union, have carried all these different models and by their very nature, it has been a challenge in building a solid co-operative movement in Africa. As long as the cooperative movement is divided, in terms of its cultural traditions and structure, the construction of a unified co-operative movement is an African agenda rather than the tradition. It is however recognized

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Member countries of the African Union, have carried all these different models and by their very nature, it has been a challenge in building a solid co-operative movement in Africa. As long as the cooperative movement is divided, in terms of its cultural traditions and structure, the construction of a unified co-operative movement is an African agenda rather than the tradition. It is however recognized that in all African countries, the co-operative movement has played its development role albeit with challenges as we will see in later sections of this presentation.

Historically however, modern co-operatives were introduced in Africa as we have seen by different colonial administrations and had a special responsibility to perform in the colonies. History has it that the areas where co-operatives were strong, were in cash growing exportable crops namely coffee, cocoa, cotton, cashew nuts and tobacco. There was a coincidence need for the co-operative enterprise. Farmers were exploited by middle men and wanted the co-operative enterprise to run fair business and earn better prices increasing their incomes. But the colonial governments, wanted co-operatives for fiscal reasons to build a taxable population for raising a budget to run the colony. But at the same time, industrial Europe, also, wanted raw material which could economically be produced and collected under collective action of co-operatives. The co-operative enterprise, though restricted from politics by the colonial governments, they gave support to the freedom movement before independence. The support for independence by the co-operative movement was not by accident, but it was natural because the co-operatives are democratic organizations whose origins are a worker's movement and propagates the struggle against the exploitation of man by man. Supporting decolonization, was the same as fighting injustice and exploitation.

The support co-operatives gave to all independence political parties in all African countries, gave the co-operative movement, space to be accommodated as one of the economic pillars of independent Africa. In countries like Tanzania and Uganda, the independent governments tried to promote cooperatives even in food crop growing areas. The enthusiasm of the independent government to enhance the number of co-operatives in different sectors of agriculture and outside agriculture such as housing, distributive trade and mining, created a new problem of management, leadership and governance. Irrespective of such problems, the co-operative enterprise continues to be a partner in development fifty years of the African union.

THE STRUCTURE AND ECONOMY OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Africa has grievously suffered from colonization and neo colonialism. But, more so from its BIG MEN and the ruling elite's preoccupation with holding power for self enrichment Deedes, W. Daily Telegraph, in Meredith, M, (2006)

Africa, is inflicted by both external and internal forces depriving it from making progress in economic development and growth. Contemporary evidence, indicates that Africa continues to depend on small scale agriculture where for example, productivity continues to register low GDP per capita of USD 663 in 2003, against a global average of per capita USD Of 5383 (Africa Analysis Database, 2003) .Although 85 % of the population lives in the rural areas and relies on agriculture, the organization of that agriculture, is under very low technical conditions and generally , depends of rainfall and consequently, victimized by erratic weather conditions (Gibbons, 1993). Erratic agricultural production makes African countries vulnerable to international commodity markets and prices because while they export primary commodities, they at the same time have to import industrial consumer and capital goods. (Arkadie,2002)

But at the same time, African countries cannot ignore the existence of small agriculture. The existence of small holder agriculture is very critical for the provision of employment, social welfare and political stability on the continent. They are too important also, for sustaining food security (Chambo, 2009 and Delgado, 1999). There is also evidence that, while their production systems are still operated by family units, the evident of liberalization and competitive markets have made them more resource poor (Delgado, *ibid*) and have resorted to the production of food crop for their subsistence as well as cash income.

Infrastructure in Africa, is generally poor and with cumbersome rent-seeking bureaucratic systems controlling foreign investment (Wangwe and Musonda,2002) and (Deedes, in Meredith,2006), market systems performance on the input and output sides of agriculture, are missing or unreliable (Delgado, ibid). This complex market situation, makes Africa, less attractive to both multinational finance and investment institutions who are usually guided by the profit motive (Chang and Grabel, 2004). The flow of capital under current globalization, will always tend to move to those countries where productivity and economic growth figure are already high like the South East Asian countries.

Most African farmers lack the skills of dealing with foreign buyers and lack market information on the different types of global markets while local capacity for processing agricultural commodities is either low or nonexistent and as a result, Africa continues to export raw material at give away prices and value adding processing, carried out in the industrialized countries. Due to advanced knowledge of markets, some countries can even buy raw coffee at low prices in Africa, stock it and re sell it at higher prices in Europe.

When it comes to mineral resources, African governments, find taxation and negotiation with multinational companies more complex to the extent that the African governments, are forced to accept minimal gains from their rich deposits of diamonds, gold, copper and uranium (Arkadie, ibid)

To demonstrate how African countries are marginalized on the global market, let us look at how African countries occupy a very low status leading to inflexibility in adaptation to a fast changing global market (Wangwe and Musonda, 2002). The table below, illustrates African weakness in information and communications technology penetration.

Table 1: African Information and Communication Technology Status, 2003

	Total subscribers (in mill)	Annual Growth Rate	Line Penetration Rate %	Global Share %
Fixed line market	25	56	2.9	2.2

Mobile phone market	51	81	6.1	3.8
Internet market	12	81	1.5	1.8
PC market	10	N/A	1.2	1.7

Source: Africa Analysis Statistics Database, 2006

From the table above, we note that, in the year 2003, Africa was not part of the global information and communications infrastructure. This implies that Africa has limitations in the acquisition of knowledge and therefore lacks the flexibility to design different options for development.

The effects of globalization in fixing Africa, are many. It has meant that some social groups such as farmers and the urban poor, are gradually excluded from the global economy and may not be able to take advantage of opportunities of globalization. While advocates of globalization argue for more reforms in African countries, to allow more foreign investments, such an argument is contradicted by decisions of multinational capital flow, moving to higher productivity centres where infrastructure and other basic inputs have been met. A long-term solution for developing countries in general and Africa in particular, is the need for their own independent perspective and design policies that initiate unique path for their own development. Each country, given their local conditions will need to study the nature of globalization and make their own interpretation (Chang and Grabel, *ibid*) on what to do in order to determine their own path of development. In that critical analysis of the right and unique path of development, the co-operative enterprise is a real and effective partner institution, for Africa's development.

THE CO-OPERATIVE SOLUTION FOR AFRICA

The co-operative enterprise came to Africa, before the independence processes in different countries. The history of co-operatives. Maghimbi, (2010) has demonstrated how co-operatives have played an effective role in Africa's development. Co-operative members could access crop finance loans without collateral. Co-operatives, enjoyed economies of larger volumes of crop collection, they raised trade profits as a result of collective entrepreneurship. Research studies on co-operatives indicate how cooperatives have tried to resolve some of the critical problems of African countries (Wanyama et al).

Those areas where co-operatives provide independent solutions to Africa's problems include. employment creation outside government budget, provision of social protection by enforcing

obligation to pay loans using traditional solidarity culture and the provision of financial services to resource poor members in the agricultural sector. Co-operatives provide member education and training so that general skills in business are enhanced. They provide skills in scientific application of seed varieties as well as linking 84% of the African population to entrepreneurship skills, high value commodity and capital markets. Irrespective of their policy based problems, (Delgado, *ibid*), co-operatives have the capacity to mobilize the skills needed in negotiation with foreign buyers and access market information beyond the confines of individual small holder farmers. Co-operatives are schools of practical democracy and governance, if provided with effective leadership, professional management and objective empowerment of the membership (Chambo, 2007)

THE AFRICAN UNION AND THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

We have argued that co-operatives are partners in development, with governments and institutions of the African union. But the discussion for this integration, is not without challenges. The following are the common challenges both the African Union and the co-operative movement need to jointly address

Technological and Cultural Conditions of Subsistence Agriculture

According to Todaro and Smith (2006), the greatest enemy of the technological, commercial and institutional processes of development in Africa, is the subsistence nature of its agricultural economy. Although production is severely limited by technology, more than technology, is to carefully examine the environmental (political, economic, cultural and social) conditions, that inhibit small farmers from constructive change.

Co-operatives are challenged in building the understanding of the environmental factors limiting change in its membership. Co-operatives have been successful in introducing commercialization of agriculture by removing middlemen from commodity markets. The experience gained by small farmers in the exchange economy has given small farmers insights to act with economic rationality and respond to incentives. The challenge here is how co-operatives can understand the wider limitations of small farmer members and how they can gradually enter surplus commodity production with minimum risks. Introducing savings and credit co-operatives in the agricultural commodity exchange economy could be a solution to influence change from subsistence to surplus

commodity production. A network of SACCOs in Karagwe district Northwestern Tanzania for example, has mobilized loanable savings which has allowed farmers access sizeable credit and reflect them on their farm investments expand acreage and increase output. The existence of the SACCO, has given them the weapon for the destruction of the subsistence economy and its vicious cycle of poverty.

The Failure of the Bureaucratic Model of Co-operative Organization

A co-operative organization and its structure are a network of equal partners. Any introduction of hierarchical structures in the co-operative organization and operations, will distort democratic practice a co-operative union for example, will start treating primary co-operatives as small units to serve upper structures of a union and the federation. The challenge here is the fact that while we have democratic Structures of co-operatives, the style of leadership and management, assumes a hierarchy of decision making and implementation. Promoters, trainers, managers and leaders of co-operatives are trained in the orthodoxy of bureaucratic systems of management and not the tradition of network democratically managed co-operative logic. This inherent bureaucratic failure (Craig:1993), is difficult to notice, but when members get used to the bureaucratic top-bottom style of management, they start to behave as subordinates to the leaders and managers and cannot demand their democratic rights of participation. By impressing on democratic regulations, the Indian co-operatives for example, gave autonomous mandatory powers to the members to remove any board members from leadership if they were found to be corrupt. This was possible due to the fact that Indian co-operative leaders became interested in member participation and the implementation of democratic practices of management and leadership. African co-operative leaders and managers are yet to see this carried out by their members, and that is our challenge.

Co-operative Promotion Using the Government

Who promotes new co-operatives in a country setting is another critical challenge in co-operatives in Africa. During the colonial era, the government promoted co-operatives because they fulfilled two purposes. First, they prepared the colonized people to enter the cash economy and pay taxes to the government. Second the government wanted to closely follow the operations of co-operatives so that they were not involved in political agitation (Campbell: 1969). They succeeded in the first, but not in the second purpose of control.

During the independence era, the co-operatives were appreciated as "economic allies in the struggle for independence" but the principle method of promotion was the blue print approach to promotion of new co-operatives. By the blue print approach and method, it was believed that the government knew in advance, why co-operatives were formed.

But the state's promotion of co-operatives, introduced a complex dimension of building co-operatives without committed membership. It replaces the members motivation for forming co-operatives by government motivation. According to Carlsson (1992), a co-operative formed by the motivation government, distorts the voluntary principle of association. It is also a distortion of social capital as defined by Teodosio (2008) who argues that social capital is peoples accumulated social relations over time and comes from the members themselves who have built trust amongst themselves without any intervention of external forces including the government. When voluntariness and social capital are distorted by the blue print approach, the resulting co-operatives are eventually owned by the government and not the members. In some countries, the co-operative laws, carry this basic message of co-operative promotion. The challenge then comes on how do we get the co-operatives back to their members. One of the reasons as to why people are not joining co-operative and why the rate of capitalization is slow in the co-operative movement is because of such basic and inherent distortions of the states model of establishment of co-operatives in Africa.

The basic solution here would be the government handing over the promotion of co-operatives to the co-operative movement. The Office of the Registrar should go back to the original meaning of the word registrar. There is a very good case of co-operative promotion in Malawi where the Community Savings and Investment Programme (COMSIP), Mzuzu Co-operative Union and the Malawi Union of Savings and Credit (MUSCO) are dealing with the promotion of co-operatives which later after fulfilling some basic known qualifications, new co-operatives are registered in the Registrar's book. While we are not saying about sustainability, yet this approach guarantees members ownership of the co-operative enterprise. But it also means that the members are ready to defend their co-operative even under stiff market competitive environments.

Sustainability of Collective Entrepreneurship

One of the greatest challenges of co-operative members is the lack of realization of how powerful they are as co-operators and not as individuals. When members form a co-operative enterprise, they are combining both their tacit and explicit knowledge of each individual member into collective entrepreneurship as a higher and more complex form of entrepreneurship above their individual entrepreneurial capacities. The individual's decision to join a co-operative, comes from an understanding that they cannot compete in business as individual entrepreneurs. So, when they move

to join the co-operative society, they are using an external strategy to improve their internal conditions of poverty. The challenge of membership here is the discovery of the tacit or hidden knowledge of each of the members so that it is used as a solid platform for generating solutions to their problems by the creation of sound collective entrepreneurship. Because the hidden knowledge of co-operators is not always the agenda for new co-operatives, the general tendency has been people thinking about cooperatives when they carry out joint marketing or getting loans from their co-operatives. When they are outside these co-operative events, they think individually and roll back to their vulnerable and poverty situation.

Keeping the pace of discovery of the hidden potential for membership in addressing co-operative issues, calls for the establishment of platforms of collective entrepreneurship where members can always meet and address critical issues, new challenges of their co-operatives and planning the right intervention for the sustainability and effectiveness of their co-operative enterprise.

Enhancement of Inter-co-operative Trade and Investment

The sixth principle of co-operation provides a framework of the design of structures for co-operation among co-operatives. The success of co-operative development in the African Union context, should provide a mechanism for review of existing trade regulations and policies to allow for international trade carried out by co-operatives among African countries. The link to different African countries can be provided and navigated by the ICA Regional Office in Nairobi. But different ministries of Trade, Industries and Commerce, could be involved in such a design. The challenge here is getting all countries to recognize the existence of federative co-operative structures in different African countries and share such information on supply and demand for co-operative products from different countries. When that recognition is given, it is easy to set the ball rolling for the ICA Secretariat to co-ordinate the supply and the demand sides of the African market.

The other challenge in this direction, is the different state responsibilities in the improvement of transport and communications infrastructure, connecting the continent with permanent road and railway networks.

Establishment of Database for Professional Co-operative Management

In Anglophone Africa, there are Co-operative Universities especially in Tanzania and Kenya. Africa has also a series of co-operative training colleges in support of the co-operative movement in as far

as human capital development is concerned. The co-operative movement in Africa needs specialized professional management to carry out the improvement of co-operative business performance for the co-operative enterprise in Africa. The challenge here is to locate an institutional framework where a database of existing professional management could be located and engaged for different assignments when needed by the co-operative movement on the continent, The ICA Regional Office for Africa could play an effective role in the establishment of such a database. This work has not started at the ICA for shortage of funding. There is need to push for the implementation from the AU perspective.

Establishment of the African Co-operative Bank and Insurance

Co-operative banking and insurance, are the life blood institutions for the co-operative movement in Africa. The co-operative movement has a business responsibility in establishing such institutions for insulating co-operative business in Africa. The challenge here is how to build such a system as a network from the AU member countries. There is need to create the required financial services right from SACCOs, co-operative banks and co-operative insurance organizations from each African country. The construction of the network of financial services, could take shape through regional economic blocks and build from there to the Africa Union levels. Again, the coordinating institution could be the ICA Regional Office for Africa.

THE WAY FORWARD

The issues pointed above, can be implemented at the individual countries' national policy levels, but they need harmonization at the AU levels. The main issues we are raising here are to deal mainly with policy, legislation and action taking by co-operators themselves. They are as follows:
Harmonization of Co-operative Policy and Legislation

The African Union could provide guidelines for a framework for the establishment of co-operative coordination offices in the headquarters of regional blocks such as SDCC, EAC, ECOWAS, COMESA. Such offices, will play a role in linking co-operative activities from different countries as well as from the ICA Regional Office for Africa. The co-ordinating offices would play a role of evaluating member country policies and laws with the aim of harmonizing them and remove individual country bottlenecks. The work has already started with the East African Farmers Federation. It needs to be continued at the East African Community and other regional economic blocks and finally move to the African Union level.

Role of the Co-operative Movement

There is need for each co-operative movement in each country to take a leading role in the integration of its activities with assumptions a continental context. In this respect, both the unified and the social economy models will play a critical role. The social economy model will be useful in the redesigning of the horizontal connectivity at the local levels to consolidate a bottom-up collective co-operative movement in Africa. The unified model will be crucial for integrating the co-operative system with other developing partners in and outside the country to build a continental co-operative structure, connecting Africa.

CONCLUSION

The co-operative movement and the African Union are partners in African development. While the African Union provides the landscape for linking African countries, the co-operative movement will mobilize the African population and especially 84% of the rural population into a wider process of organizational development for enterprise development, enhancing income, reducing poverty through democratically guided business entities, implementing equity, self responsibility and caring for others in Africa. Such a process of continental co-operative development is not without challenges. But we can face such challenges if action to recognize the co-operative movement is attained at regional economic block levels through harmonization of co-operative policy and legislation, trade laws and at the same time, countries taking deliberate measures to improve transport and communications networks across the African continent.

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