



International development: challenges for a world in transition

Developing for the Future

Narrator:

Clearly there's much development work taking place by the African Diaspora. But how should the Diaspora be developing it's work in the future.

Chukwu-Emeka Chikezie,

If we think about the future, let's go back for a minute to the question of the generator and the Ogidi Women's Association in Nigeria. I think we should rightly celebrate and be happy that people are addressing immediate needs. Clearly if they didn't do so, there wouldn't be electricity in that region. And people would die and people would suffer. However, we also have to look at the bigger questions. Why is it that that particular region of Nigeria is deprived. And so deprived of health care facilities that are much needed. These are essentially political questions. And the African Diaspora needs to engage with these sorts of issues. If our interventions are going to have lasting impact, and the ultimately contributors sustainable development, that's what we need to do.

So what we need to think about here, is continuing with the immediate needs. But also beginning to mobilise to amass the information. To get a deeper understanding of the causes of problems. So that we can intervene at those levels. And this means holding institutions much more to account. At the local level in Nigeria, the national level in Nigeria. Global institutions.

Take for example the structural adjustment programmes that were initiated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Particularly starting in the 1980s, but have evolved since then. These were sorts of programmes that required governments to cut back on public investment, as a way of correcting government finances. These programmes have resulted in under investment in the public sector, in structural adjustment countries. Now the Diaspora, if they can get a grasp of these issues are well placed to raise the sorts of questions, and to hold institutions, which are based in London, based in Washington, based in Paris, much more to account. Two, to begin to link up. Not just to work at the local village level. But to begin to link up with other villages, other Diaspora's that are facing very similar problems and very similar issues in other parts of Nigeria. In other parts of Africa, and indeed globally. This will lead to a much more effective sort of intervention, by the Diaspora. I think we'll be in the long run, much more developmental.

Narrator: The relationship between donor organisations like Oxfam or the Department for International Development, the recipient in Africa, can often be a difficult one. The recipient may be reluctant to raise issues. Not wishing to bite the hand that feeds it. What's a diasporas' role in such a situation.

C-E-C.

We also need to look at Diaspora and mainstream international organisations, such as the Department for International Development. Which is the government department. Which addresses development issues. And also non governmental organisations. Such as Oxfam and Christian Aid. What we really need to see is much more collaboration between these sorts of organisations. That have ostensibly similar aims in terms of tackling poverty, and tackling the causes of poverty in the developing world. But significantly, what the Diaspora can do is to hold these institutions much more to account.

Narrator:

If we look at the future in terms of globalisation and the information revolution. How important it the transfer of skills among the Africa Diaspora.

C-E-C.

What Africa has suffered among other things in the last 20 or so years, is something of a brain drain. With the mass exodus in some cases of people who are well skilled, well trained in a number of different areas. Be that high technology, like information and communication technology. Like science, medicine. But also entrepreneurs. People who actually could create wealth and set up businesses and these sorts of things. They are not creating that wealth. But they're doing it in the Diaspora.

Now what is required is access in the first instance to these people's skills, their knowledge, their networks of information. It's very unlikely that people in the short term at least are going to pack up their bags in large numbers and return home. But now we're in a situation where we have technology. We have very rapid frequent movement of people. So there should be new opportunities to tap into, a lot of this knowledge. As people, companies for example, are spreading their investments. They're looking at Africa, as perhaps the virgin territory that hasn't been sufficiently developed or exploited. And there's a role here for Africans in the Diaspora to transfer the knowledge. Also to explain the global context. So that people who are perhaps talking to potential investors have an understanding of where these investors are coming from. And what are the needs, and so on. And the long term and particularly in the 21st century, Africa and the future of Africa very much lies in the hands of Africans. Both in Africa itself and outside. And what we're about is enhancing that to the maximum potential.

Narrator:

Diasporic communities like the Sierra Leonnians in the UK, or a wider Africa network abroad, can play an important role in development back home. They can also help new immigrants settle into a foreign country. Development can be facilitated by new kinds of development agents. Through family ties, local associations like the one in Liverpool. Or large organisations like AFFORD. They can also contribute to reframing how and where development takes place.