

# UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL



54563



Distr.  
LIMITED

E/CN.14/SWCD/INF.1  
2 September 1969

ENGLISH ONLY

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
Africa Regional Conference on the Integrated  
Approach to Rural Development  
Moshi, Tanzania  
13-24 October 1969

## COUNTRY STATEMENT - SUDAN

### Aspects Concerning Integrated Approach to Rural Development in the Democratic Republic of the Sudan

#### Definition

I think, that the proper approach to the problem of Rural Development in the various countries of the continent of Africa is to look upon it as a question of rather social and economic emergence of the peoples concerned in these countries. In the first place it should be so simply because the bulk of population is essentially rural. In the second place it is so because the continent has experienced a long history of foreign rule and in the third place because the rural communities almost everywhere in the continent face not only the problem of poverty but quite often that of hunger and starvation, not only a situation of disease prevalence but often that of epidemics and not only a state of ignorance but rather that of complete darkness.

The contrast is not so sharp nor so grievous that we often draw between the developing and industrialized countries but rather drastic is the contrast which actually exists between our town and the village.

If the situation is so, then, our national and inter-regional rural development efforts should necessarily be concerned a great deal with the socio-economic emergence of the rural communities in our various countries. To such an extent the rural development should form the core of any national development plan or programme. This is further emphasized by the fact that we feel a real need for not only to develop our countries but also to score a homogeneous and balanced development minimizing the contrast between the countryside and the town and manifesting, if possible such ideals as social justice, equal opportunities and general prosperity at large.

### The Sudan

Before considering the aspects of integrated approach to rural development in the Democratic Republic of the Sudan it is worthy to consider first the unique nature of the Sudan.

The Democratic Republic of the Sudan is a wide expanse of country covering an area of one million square miles. It stretches south-north right from the periphery of the equatorial belt in gentle transitions to the edge of Sahara. In a zonal stretch the country extends from the Republic of Central Africa and Chad in the west to the edge of Ethiopia Plateau and the Red Sea Hills in the east and north east. The drainage system is defined by the river Nile and its tributaries from south west and south east leaving the west, north west and north east with no well defined drainage system. The rainfall tapers from more than 60 inches in the equatorial belt to almost nil in the edges of Sahara in the North.

The size of population is now about 14 million persons thus giving an average density of 14 persons/square mile. The actual population distribution is of course quite different explainable in terms of the sharp contrast among the different regions. This unique nature of contrasts of physiography, climate and population distribution together with ethnic groups could easily be seen to have quite important implications in terms of distribution of natural resources and regional potential capabilities. Hereunder we outline the outstanding aspects of this nature of contrasts in the Democratic Republic of the Sudan.

- (1) Emergence of different self-contained communities till recently detached from each other.
- (2) Naturally dictated self-dependence of these communities within the natural capabilities of their different habitats.
- (3) Consequently the becoming of the population essentially traditional rural agriculturalist or rural pastoralist (some 70-80 per cent of the total population of the Sudan).
- (4) Existence of this bulk of population unproductive or of extremely low productivity living within the margins of poverty.

### Historical Approach

Acknowledging the fact that the past is essentially engraved in the future, a historical approach to the topic of rural development in the Republic of the Sudan would be very useful as due to the nature of actual experience in this field and the lessons which could be drawn for the benefit of prospective efforts motivating integrated rural development in the country. In this accord, the departing point for the former self-contained and almost closed communities over the outlying parts of the

Sudan was the enactment by the Condominium Government of the so-called general policy directed to the economic development of the Sudan. This policy began with the rise of the Gezira Scheme and the introduction of cotton as a commercial cash crop which extended in Tot hills plan to the southern provinces and Nuba Mts. in Southern Kordofan Province. Since the Gezira Scheme constitutes a very special case, the best examples for past efforts in the field of rural development are presented by the Nuba Mts. programme and the Zande Scheme in South West of Equatoria Province.

#### Nuba Mts. Programme

The introduction of cotton within the above mentioned programme to the area of Nuba Mts. goes back to the year 1924 but many years elapsed before it could be well established thereabouts. The policy underlying the programme was reported by the British Government as turning swords into plough-shares since the Nuba remained till then militant to the foreign rule. The economic motive of raising the living standard of the Nuba under this programme could be judged from the fact that in 1951/52 about 2 million pounds were paid to the cultivators for their cotton harvest. However, it is interesting to point out that this could be possible only after the abandonment by the British of its systematic plans for cotton husbandry. The type of contrast was of course between the introduction of the ideal land husbandry methods of West Europe and the traditional indigenous methods of shifting cultivation. At the end the traditional methods were left to prevail with only direct influence of distributing standard seeds, grading and buying the harvest.

The reshuffle in the history of cotton husbandry in the area came in early 1950 which witnessed a great rise in the world prices. The temptation of high cotton returns was so strong that it caused a real revolutionary change in the conceptions of the people. It was, then, a common contention among them that it was worth-while to concentrate on cotton growing and obtain food from the market through the cotton proceeds. This was a turn-over which reshuffled the traditional system of self-sufficiency. As such, although the experiment succeeded in introducing exchange economy, the direct effects were rather irrational behaviour of these cultivators which in turn entailed much more evils than the apparent benefits of the programme. The sequence of events was in such a way that all the cultivators came to concentrate solely on cotton growing abandoning altogether 'dura' their staple food crop. Soon there was no dura in the markets for sale or if there was any, only at very high prices. Here below is an attempt to enumerate some important social and economic effects of this experience:

- (1) The sudden in-rush into the cultivation of cotton carried with it all elements of uncertainty and risks visualized in the effects of natural factors on the one hand and economic factors on the other. The risks of mono-culture system could of course by no means be underestimated not even in more developed regions or countries.

- (2) As confronted with large sums of cash money at hand, the simple peasants with their simple values, just stood helpless with regard to rational allocation of that cash money. Undoubtedly their appreciation of a higher level of needs and wants, is a prerequisite of rational behaviour.
- (3) The most grievous social and economic effect was that the extravagance in expenditure at harvest time left the peasants empty-handed during growing season and they were thus forced to turn to some help whatsoever. Unfortunately, there was nobody to extend such a help apart from the traders and merchants who were essentially fortune-makers and there they got a golden chance. The type of help which they began to extend put the first seeds of the 'shell system' the predominant evil of the simple agrarian communities.

#### Zande Scheme

The objective of the Zande scheme was as it came in its charter of set up 'the general policy of the Board (Equatoria scheme Board) aims at the social emergence of the peoples of Equatoria Province and the purely commercial aspects of the undertakings committed to its charge shall be in conformity with that end. Nevertheless any effort not inconsistent with such aim shall be made to maintain the solvency of the Board by the conduct of its affairs in accordance with sound business principles including a reasonable return on the capital employed.'

It is questionable, then, to what extent this objective was realized. The fact is that, as was the case with the Nuba, the objective of drawing the attention of people thereabouts to the significant role of money in an exchange economy was more or less realized but again in a rather distorted manner. However the conduct of affairs in accordance with sound business principles including a reasonable return was never realized for the following obvious reasons:

- (1) The root cause is to be found in the type of organization set up to execute the undertakings mainly in being too business minded and resorting to compulsion.
- (2) The human element was almost disregarded or given very little consideration.
- (3) The plan-project itself was rather irrational in having taken little consideration of the special conditions prevailing in that area, i.e. social and cultural standings deeply rooted in the past of the people. In fact the project was more or less a quick stride to jump within an eye's blink from barter to cash economy.

- (4) Raising the standards of living, as mentioned before, is another version of raising the degree of needs and wants which is essentially a psychological and cultural matter, depending only for actual realization upon the pure economic factor.

#### Present Situation

These two cases could be seen to help a great deal our attempts for the valuation of the present situation while they also credit the plans for sound prospective integral approach to the problem of rural Development in the Sudan.

To begin with, the backwardness of the rural parts of the Sudan could be specified in the following:

- (1) Ignorance, with such related aspects of backward traditions, habits and conceptions among the rural communities, remains to constitute a most drastic hindrance in the way of their development.
- (2) Poverty, especially among the rural agrarian communities predominates actually to the extent to which their living standards fall to the margin of bare subsistence level. Still, however, and grievously enough they are contented with such a life, often because of the difficulty in their part just to appreciate the significance of any change. (This statement highly applies to the pastoral communities).
- (3) Disease in the third place still remains to constitute a continuous threat.
- (4) For the Republic of the Sudan the problem of thirst stands at an equal footing with the above mentioned three. It is quite easy to sense the acuteness of thirst in such a vast country which raises some 8 million cattle, 11 million sheep, 8 million goats and 4 million camels. On the other hand, the effect of drought on the rain cultivated areas is quite fatal for both crops and pasture.
- (5) Upon all these is superimposed the effect of distance in terms of transport and communication facilities.

#### Present Efforts for Rural Development

The first integrated approach to the development of rural communities in the Sudan is related to the Ten-Year Plan for social and economic Development 1961/1970/71 since it forms the first experience for the country in the way of comprehensive national economic planning.

In this plan it has been postulated as one of top objectives the removal of the barriers which prevent population of the backward areas from participating in the modern monetary sector. The importance of this objective has been touched upon before but it is more or less visualized in the fact that the majority of the peasant communities are not economically productive despite the fact that the economy of the country is essentially agricultural. On the other side, the economic effect of the huge animal population is almost nil. Another objective of the plan to this effect is the improvement of education, health and other social services to create cultural and social environment capable of coping with the requirements of a new economic life. In fact the sector of services in general was allotted about 29 per cent of the total plan investment. However this year is the ninth year of the plan implementation and already two years ago the need for a general revision of the ten-year plan was felt. Actually by April 1969 a 5-year public sector investment programme was formulated to replace the ten-year plan. This in itself explains that the Ten Year Plan achievements were not to the basic expectation. However, we could dare to specify that the structure of the plan itself hardly embodied real integrated projections for the social emergence of the country people. This is assured by the fact that only towards the end of the year 1965 and in reply for the cries of thirst, pasture deterioration and forest destruction that a Rural Water and Development Corporation was formed to lead a successful campaign in the field of fighting thirst. But thirst as we pointed out above is only one of several problems facing the countryside.

### Conclusion

We thus logically come to conclude with the definition we made for my conception of the problem of rural development at least in my country. As I pointed out, the problem is one of emergence and as such it is undetachably compact. There is the urgent need to focus the interest and attention to the human-being as such in the remote countryside in the first place and his natural, cultural and economic environment in the second place. As such the need for channelling more and more investment in this line becomes prominent. However, we cannot forget the dilemma of the so many important and urgent needs of ours in the face of the limited resources at our disposal. A quick development and modernization of our economy prerequisites propagation of the disposable resources through more and more productive investment. This could be maintained only at the sacrifice of unproductive investment which practically could not be sacrificed. The way out is in a proper harmonization in proper and sound national plan or programmes. Still however, at this

stage of development a certain degree of bias for the human-being is necessary because an educated, healthy and nourished population could form a sound ground and effective tool for further development of the economy.

Adam Ibrahim El Imam  
MINISTRY OF PLANNING  
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE SUDAN

28 July 1969

-----