

THE CHANGING PARADIGMS OF DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Regardless of how development may be understood, a reasoned discussion of its meaning or definitions serves a very important function. As development becomes an integral part of the governmental functions and responsibilities throughout the world, a common understanding of development provides the foundation for future policy analysis and debate that will inevitably follow. Development generally shows the living standards of the people in any country. Since development is multifaceted, it may be appropriate to accept a family of definitions rather than select one to the exclusion of another. No single definition incorporates all of the different strands of development. Typically development can be described in terms of objectives. These are most commonly described as the creation of jobs and wealth, and the improvement of quality of life. Economic development can also be described as a process that influences growth and restructuring of an economy to enhance the economic well being of a community... What these definitions should share in common, however, is a sense that objectives need to drive country's development choices.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, there are enormous and unprecedented changes in the World economy-taking place. The speed of technological and political transformations is unparalleled in history (see, for example, Adamson 1993). The past several decades have seen a significant improvement in the lives of the people in developing countries: life expectancy has increased by 50 per cent; infant and child death rates have been cut in half; the proportion of children starting school has risen from less than half to more than three quarters - despite a doubling of population; and the percentage of rural families with access to safe water has risen from less than 10 per cent to almost 60 per cent. In the past 25 years alone, average per capita incomes in the developing world have doubled (Sandstrom, 1994: 30). So the achievements in human well being in the past 40 years have been remarkable, but also remarkable have been dogmatic problems in the developing countries. Despite this progress, poverty remains the greatest challenge facing the world today. More than a billion people still struggle to survive on less than a dollar a day. Child mortality rates in the developing countries are still ten times higher than in the developed countries. Seven million people still die every year from easily preventable disease. And the income gape between rich and poor countries is still widening: over the past 30 years,

incomes in the countries with the richest 20 per cent of world population grew nearly three times faster than in those countries with the poorest 20 per cent. The disparity between the income of the richest 20 per cent and the poorest 20 per cent doubled between 1960 and 1990 (UNDP: 1992). Perhaps here the following words of Jules Feiffer are relevant: "I used to think I was poor. Then they told me I was needy. Then they said it was self-defeating to think I was needy; instead I was deprived. Then they said deprived had a bad image; I was really underprivileged. Then they said underprivileged was overused; I was disadvantaged. I still don't have a cent, but I have a great vocabulary" (quoted in Nafis Sadik 1991: 19).

The development context follows directions that are blatantly opposed to one another. Edgard Morin (1991) understands the process of change that is underway to be contradictory and conflicting. The technological revolution that has appeared on so many fronts is a promise of prodigious progress but at the same time, as the Earth Summit (Brazil: 1992) warned, the blind unregulated development of technology may contribute to the rapid collapse of vital ecologically balanced systems. Moreover, it has been shown that job cutbacks go hand in hand with the type of economic growth produced. Much of the recent literature emphasises an inverse