



THE LITTLE BOOK OF AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES

Compiled by
**Taibat Lawanson
& Bisoye Eleshin**





Interrogating African Contexts and Conceptualizations of Development

There are varying definitions of development across disciplines, praxis and locations. The term is complex, contested, and often ambiguous. It is also a highly political term, with a range of meanings that depend on the context in which the term is used. Definitions are often contradictory, and approaches reflective of western hegemonic ideas, resulting in unintended consequences for Africa. As such, it is important for researchers to take a closer look at the intricacies, contents and contexts of these development calls and how they impact Africa's people and identities.

The African Cluster Centre (Lagos-ACC)¹ at the Institute of Africa and Diaspora Studies (IADS), University of Lagos convened a series of intellectual engagements aimed at (re)interrogate the conceptualizations and implementation of the 'Development Agenda' in Africa. Through a series of activities including a literature reviews, public survey, in - depth interviews and multi-stakeholder workshops with participants drawn from different African countries and/or the diaspora, the following were attempted:

- **An interrogation of the concept of 'Development' across various disciplines.**
- **A deep dive into the impacts and consequences of development in Africa, with a focus on people, systems and structures.**
- **An attempt to outline the fundamental dimensions/indicators of Africa's development and/or African Development**

In this **Little Book of African Development Perspectives**, we present a documentation of grounded understanding of the Africa's development trajectory from the perspectives of thought leaders, political leaders and everyday citizens.

¹The Institute of Africa and Diaspora Studies (IADS) at the University of Lagos (IADS) hosts the Lagos - Africa Cluster Centre (Lagos ACC) of the 'Africa Multiple' programme - a collaboration with Bayreuth University- Germany, Rhodes University - South Africa, Moi University - Kenya and Université Ouagadougou - Burkina Faso. The aim of the Africa Multiple programme is to reconfigure African Studies and open new vistas of multidisciplinary and multisectoral enquiry and engagement.

Acknowledgement

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Foreword

“Development,” as is evident from the massive literature on the subject and the content of this volume, is a charged, hegemonic, and normative concept. Like a moving target, it is not easily pinned down in a universally acceptable definition. That said, as we grapple with defining or describing what it is, we should also indicate what it is not. Thus, development does not exist in a social, physical or ideological vacuum; it is not driven or sustained by external forces; it is not sporadic or episodic, that is, it is not an event; it does not happen by accident; it is not cost-free; it is not a given or a stroll in the park; and it is not merely reducible to cold (economic or demographic) statistics.

The Little Book of African Development Perspectives, a richly documented and research-based harvest of ideas and perspectives, can be likened to capturing the different descriptions of the elephant by the legendary blind men of Hindustan. As each described what he touched, felt and perceived, so can development be felt and perceived differently by individuals (scholars and non-scholars alike) and groups, and no perspective is absolutely right or wrong. This is what is presented in this book in the actual words of the respondents.

This volume captures the diversity of African concepts of “development.” In a 1977 article in the *Journal of Development Studies*, John Peel had identified “*ọlaju*” (“enlightenment”) as the “key indigenous concept of development among the Yoruba” of Southwest Nigeria. He opined that it encompasses “relations of knowledge and power” and sundry association “with education, the world religions, external trade and travel.” “*Ọlaju*” is in that sense analogous to the Japanese “*bunmei kaika*” (“civilization and enlightenment”). This suggests that though “development” could have been invented by the West, it has since been appropriated by non-Western societies, for whom “development” is coterminous with modernity, change and progress. Gilbert Rist in *The History of Development* described it as “an element in the religion of modernity.” However, nineteenth-century Meiji Japan took care to distinguish modernization from westernization. This demonstrates the imperative of balancing the universal and the particular, and underscores indigeneity, agency and ownership in the developmental process.

The Little Book on African Development Perspectives bridges the gap between global surveys, such as Rist’s magisterial tome, and Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, on the one hand, and micro studies, exemplified by the aforementioned “*Ọlaju*” article, on the other. This book reinforces the view



that development implies any or all of these referents: a journey, a destination, an idea(l) or an aspiration. It also speaks to change: not mere economic growth, advances in technology or infrastructure development, but sustainable, long-run structural change.

The book raises a number of questions, including the following: Is development measurable? If so, are the indices employed objective or subjective? Is development a product of popular (but not necessarily well informed) clamour, or transformative (but imposed) idea(l)s of a hegemonic elite? Is development an urban phenomenon, driven by urban dynamics and urban-based elites and interests? In other words, where is agency, who owns the project and for whom is it being undertaken? Is “development” ever a democratic project? What role does technology play in development? Could development be achieved without exploitation and social injustice? Is it linear or reversible? Does development have an antipode in anti-development? Could a locale develop in one sphere (such as technology) but remain underdeveloped in another (such as governance)? In other words, is balanced development (sectoral, sub-national) attainable? Is development still (or no longer) a Western construct, a representation of Western values and imperial hegemony?

The Little Book of African Development Perspectives makes a case for context, decolonization, cultural renaissance, inclusivity and governance reforms in the developmental process. The book is a tribute to the diligence and perspicacity of its authors and their collaborators. Its strength lies in the wide range of sources, and the depth of research and analysis displayed in its content. The cutting-edge, interdisciplinary methodology that produced it is a model for future researchers.

This volume makes a novel, significant contribution to the literature on African development. It is warmly recommended to scholars and general readers for its illuminating insights into what remains a contested concept in scholarship, policy analysis and praxis.

Ayodeji Olukoju, PhD, FNAL
University Distinguished Professor
of History University of Lagos
November 2021

In search of the what African Development really means

by **Taibat Lawanson & Bisoye Eleshin**

The discourse on Africa's development trajectory is full of differing narratives and discordant tunes. What exactly does Development mean – as a concept and in the context of Africa?

We set about collating perspectives of experts and everyday people of African descent on the continent and in the diaspora. Through a series of public conversations including online surveys and street interviews, expert interviews, focus group discussions and co-design sessions.²

Here are a few things we learnt:

1. Defining African Development needs contextualization:

Development as a normative concept is difficult to objectify. In the context of Africa, it is not neutral as current definitions seek to enforce dominant neo-colonial paradigms and the perpetual state of universalism. Who determines what can be universally accepted? And to what extent does this universal dimension centre Africa's interests? While we acknowledge the fundamental universal ideals of development that resonate across cultures and citizens, we cannot but recognize the distinguishing norms and values of African concepts such as Ubuntu (I am because we are), Omoluabi (the honour code) that elevate the African development agenda at personal and communal levels.

² See: https://iads.unilag.edu.ng/lacc/?page_id=2713





2. Africa's development trajectory should be decolonized:

The significant contributions of Africa's human and capital resources in supporting the prosperity of the Global North is often downplayed if not ignored completely. Neo-colonialism and Globalization bear an uncanny resemblance: the exploitation and exportation of Africa, and the entrenchment of a global order based on western hegemony and foreign aid. Over time, this has resulted in the non-violent dispossession of African autonomy. Therefore, it behooves us to challenge the dominant oppressive mode by ensuring that Africa's place in global affairs - both historical and contemporary - are appropriately documented and disseminated for international learning; and that policies and global agreements are supportive of Africa's interests.

3. Africa's Development requires an urgent cultural renaissance:

The uncritical embrace of western hegemony has led to the neglect of African cultural assets including language, history, indigenous knowledge systems and social customs. As such, there is a continuous eroding of African identities and a distorted understanding of development priorities. Reversing this unfortunate trend starts with targeted interventions in the education sector, making African cultures, nodes of thought and knowledge easily accessible, and ensuring that norms and practices that amplify African development values are mainstreamed. This cultural renaissance should also entail investment in and internationalisation of African entertainment and heritage for tourism purposes.

4. Africa's Development should be an inclusive process:

Sweeping recommendations of pathways to prosperity often leave so many behind. From our studies, we find a general acknowledgement that while neo-liberalism supports trickle down economics, it does not really work in the African context. In fact, the ruling political elite and government are often the real beneficiaries of a top-down development planning system that barely takes into consideration the lived experiences and contextualised needs of average citizens. Therefore, Africa's development trajectory must embrace a humanist approach that expands the spaces by which social structures and human dignity are prioritized, and everyday people are able to aspire to their highest potentialities.



5. Africa's development requires extensive governance reforms

Many African governments are conduits for western hegemony in the prioritization of instrumentalities that promote neo-colonial models. While we have to deal with the vestiges of colonial legacies, current realities demand that leadership should be realigned towards a people centres vision of progress. First is to shift from the faulty premise that economic prosperity is the end goal of development. Second is to shift from focusing on the materiality of infrastructure to measuring the impact of such infrastructure on the well-being of citizens. Third is to shift from the current emphasis on strong men and state building elite to building institutions where good governance and human rights are entrenched.

While the definition of African development is still elusive, we are convinced that at individual, community, country and continental levels, the work must be done by all – thinkers, citizens and leaders - to achieve the aspiration of a great continent whose development is centered on promoting the potentials and dignity of all her people.

United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development

The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/righttodevelopment.aspx>



African Union “Agenda 2063 - The Africa we want”

We rededicate ourselves to the enduring Pan African vision of “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena. We are confident that Africa has the capability to realise her full potential in development, culture and peace and to establish flourishing, inclusive and prosperous societies.

We thus, commit to act together towards achieving the following aspirations:

ASPIRATION

1. A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development
2. An integrated continent, politically united based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the vision of Africa’s Renaissance
3. An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law
4. A peaceful and secure Africa
5. An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics
6. An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children
7. Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner

<https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>

https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf



During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

- Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela(1918 - 2013) was an anti-apartheid revolutionary and President of South Africa (1994 - 1999)





If development is seen as the qualitative and quantitative, positive and beneficial transformation of the lives of the majority of the people, not only in terms of production, but also in relation to the existence of various institutions that ensure that their dignity as human beings and their material and non-material needs are guaranteed, then the involvement of the people in the productive life of the nation is a minimal requirement for any tangible progress.

Akin-Aina. Tade (1993) *Development Theory and Africa's Lost Decade: Critical Reflections on Africa's crisis and current trends in Development Thinking and Practice*

But what is development if it is not the “unending advancement and promotion of the individual and collective wellbeing of the peoples of a nation, society and our world. But that promotion and advancement must note where notions and actions of individual wellbeing collide and conflict with those of others such as specific collectivises and other individuals. Development then includes how we negotiate and reconcile the conflicts and tensions in the advancement and promotion of individual and collective wellbeing of peoples with each other and with nature. Development therefore involves a further search and working for an integration of our individual and collective wellbeing within social just and equitable political, social, economic and cultural orders.”

Akin- Aina. Tade (2003) *Scales of Sufering, Orders of Emancipation: Critical Issues in Democratic Development in Africa. African Sociological Review. 7(1)*

In the end, “**development is a gigantic work-in-progress**”. Tade Akin-Aina, 2021

Tade Akin Aina is a Nigerian Professor of Sociology and Development studies and the Head of Research at the Mastercard Foundation



Photo Credit; Deji Akinpelu/AFD



Western models of democracy and development have tended to focus on economic prosperity almost as the end goal of development. The World Bank continues to present us with indices of human development by which we are also measuring ourselves. But each time we measure ourselves against these existing indices, we realise that we are adopting models that have no real serious relevance to our people because these models have already formed western civilisation and societies, and they do not work among us. When politicians in Africa go about listing projects that they have carried out, little attention is paid on how the building of these projects have touched the human person. African politicians have continued to talk exuberantly about their achievements by measurable indicators like visible infrastructure, they have refused to understand that infrastructure by itself does not constitute development, but how it helps us to become real human and to achieve our God-given destiny, it is only then that we can talk about development. At the centre of development is the human person.

- Bishop Mathew Kukah

Matthew Hassan Kukah is the bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Sokoto, Nigeria and a member of the Vatican Dicastery on Integral Human Development.



“From the African perspective, development is a matter of realizing our potential and making the progress that we know is humanly possible because others have gotten there.”

- Tony Elumelu

Tony Elumelu is a Nigerian economist, entrepreneur and philanthropist



Photo Credit; Deji Akinpelu/AFD



What we need in Africa is balanced development. Economic success cannot be a replacement for human rights or participation or democracy... it doesn't work. Experience shows that when political governance and economic management diverge, overall development becomes unsustainable. Nobody can come and develop Africa on behalf of Africans.

- Mo Ibrahim

Dr Mo Ibrahim is a Sudanese-British businessman and the Founder and Chair of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, established in 2006 to support good governance and exceptional leadership on the African continent.



Development is a normative construct, it is difficult to objectify and it is very diversified. The only way to arrive at that diversification is to decolonise and deconstruct the dominant paradigm in the process of development... Development is not something that can be done for a society by other people, although they can have a notion of how they can develop but it is the people themselves who must develop themselves. There is a cultural envelope that comes with every stage of development. If that envelope is not congruent with the level of development, there will be a dissonance which will be the beginning of the problem of development. We must, through our scholarship, show that western authored development, western desired development, is not all there is to development. We need to have development paradigms that will be acculturated. We need to have filters for our cultural envelopes that can make us owners of our development process, or else, development will be what governments want and not what the people want.

- Eghosa Osaghae

Eghosa Osaghae is a Nigerian professor of political science, and Director-General of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs



Photo Credit: Deji Akinpelu/AFD



The main purpose of development should be to develop the man and not to end with developing things. It is important therefore to state that development in Africa should transit beyond economic growth to people-centred development in which the fulfilment of basic needs of the people is achieved.

- Patricia Donli, Nigeria

Professor Patricia Donli is Nigerian agriculturist and social activist, and the Chairperson of Gender Equality, Peace and Development Centre.



When the history of African development is written, it will be clear that a turning point involved the empowerment of women.

- Sheryl WuDunn

Sheryl WuDunn is an American business executive, writer, lecturer, and Pulitzer Prize winner.



Photo Credit: Deji Akinpelu/AFD



Development in Africa refers to policies pursued by governments and international agencies which enrich ruling elites and technocrats, while the masses are told to await the benefits of the trickle down.

- Frantz Fanon

Frantz Fanon, (1925 - 1961) was a French West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher whose work is influential in the fields of post-colonial studies, critical theory and Marxism.



Most of the conceptions of development that are produced by African intellectuals and thinkers are actually not African, because they have their origin in foreign civilizations, foreign cultures where they trained...So it will appear that the way to go about African conceptualization of development is to locate it within spacio- cultural paradigm of the community where the idea is springing from. Let each group develop its own notion of development. Let social and political power be extended to them so that they will be able to use their own understanding of their culture to create a model of development that will resonate with the people that make them. Let us - As Africans - go into the world to contribute, not just to copy.

- Jim Unah

Jim UNAH is a Distinguished Professor of Philosophy of the University of Lagos. He is a former Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academics), Premier University of Sao Tome and Principe.



Photo Credit: Deji Akinpelu/AFD



Development is the result of efforts geared toward achieving peace and happiness for people and the environment. Development is culture-based and therefore definable by cultural values. These cultural values are archived by indigenous languages of the people who seek to enjoy the benefits of development. So, the conception of development varies from people to people. One group cannot set the criteria for attainment of development. What is witnessed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and their incongruity with the need and expectation of Africans in Africa on development further confirms that the concept is culture dependent.

- Ayo Yusuff

Ayo Yusuff is Research Professor of Language Engineering at the Institute of African and Diaspora Studies, University of Lagos.



There is a terminology problem about development in Africa. For instance, I am unable to find the right word for development in any Burkina indigenous languages. Development seems to be a western vision of human progress which the west has succeeded in depositing into the collective imagination of the African people.

- Emillie Ouattara

Sanon Ouattara F. Emilie Georgette is an Associate Professor at the Department of Translation/Interpreting, University Joseph KI-ZERBO, Burkina Faso





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Personally, I feel that we will be developed when our people are developed. And when we have good education, good food security and good health care. It is the people that drive development, I believe that if you do not invest in the people there will not be development. There are other indicators of development that are not necessarily tied to finances, but I think any development should look at how well can you feed yourself, how well are your people growing and how much education they are getting. The universal yardsticks of development need to take into consideration the culture, where the culture does not harm the people even though it may be different. For example, let us say polygamy, you would send people to prison in England, or the US, and then there is a problem when we say in Africa that we do not like same sex marriage.

- Folasade Ogunsola

Folasade Ogunsola is a Professor of Clinical Microbiology at the College of Medicine, University of Lagos, Nigeria.



If you are trying to compare things, you need to find the baseline that works. The problem with the baseline is that it is being determined by the West, the developed world decides what constitutes low income, middle income or high income, so at the moment, you do need some way to compare development...We can build like Dubai. Yes, we can. We know we can. But the question is: What does that do for our citizens?

- Ola Uduku

Ola Uduku is a Nigerian - British -architect and Head of the Liverpool University's School of Architecture



Photo Credit; Deji Akinpelu/AFD



The west should understand that in some parts of the world, fighting poverty and insecurity is more of a priority than LGBTQ rights and whether a 13 year-old wants to identify as a tree or tortoise. Every culture has several layers of development. I am sure that in the 18th/19th century, America (for example) had very different priorities. It is unfortunate that the challenges they faced way back are the challenges most developing (third world?) countries face today. Maybe these (developing) countries should be allowed (perhaps supported) to tackle these challenges first. Let these countries focus on their priorities.

- Kelvin Odanz, Abuja - Nigeria

Kelvin Odanz is a Nigerian communications analyst and a social commentator



Development is a concept that puts people at its heart, and being able to ensure that every person can achieve their needs, and then be able to focus on their wants, and to be able to do this in a context of real consideration of our resources like the climate and overall environmental well-being. We don't even have a coherent understanding of what development is, and that doesn't even mean across geographies, it even across sectors. Development is very, very different for someone who is an anthropologist or sociologist, or someone who is working in the medical sector. And so if we don't have a common understanding of the word development, then creating a universal yardstick around it becomes very difficult.

- Astrid Haas

Astrid Haas is an Austrian-Ugandan urban economist with wide experience spanning government and non-governmental organizations across many developing countries



Photo Credit: Deji Akinpelu/AFD



Time has come to move away from the complexity and ambiguity that the definition of development generates. Thinking about development is development in itself as it pictures the beginning of a process, an itinerary towards a destination. Development does not take place in a confused setting. It occurs when different components of a system obey the transformational principles of change embedded in them. Development is the state of disclosure of connectedness of moments in a process. It reveals the continuous process of change and transformation. Development is indeed the consciousness, the recognition of a gradual, steady or accelerated transformation of ideas, things, events and even life as it unfolds within an individual or collective system.

- Peter Oni

Dr Peter Oni is a Nigerian philosopher and Senior lecturer at the University of Lagos



Development changes lives of people in terms of economic wellbeing and political space. Development is not the same as growth. Growth is simply expansion in volume of goods and services but development is a wider concept that encompasses socio-economic and political transformation of the people in totality so that they can improve.

- Paul Opondo

Dr Paul Opondo is a Kenyan Historian and Senior Lecturer at Moi University, Kenya



Photo Credit; Deji Akinpelu/AFD

The only time when development and underdevelopment make sense is in a comparative view

Paradigms must change. The change should start with redefining the meaning of development

Africa has developed and Africa is still developing. The question is: In what direction is Africa developing? Is it developing in a direction to suit the will of the West? Is Africa supposed to develop in a comparative sense that puts us in a perpetual race to catch up with the West? Or is Africa developing in its own way, in its own understanding of reality, and in its own way of improving its own environment, to be able to live well within its own environment without necessarily copying what the West has imposed on us?

- Muiyiwa Falaiye

Muyiwa Falaiye is Professor of African Philosophy and Director of the Institute of African and Diaspora Studies, University of Lagos, Nigeria.

I see development in Africa largely as a function of external dynamics, policies and socio-economic dynamics rather than, for instance, a result of our state economic planning, policies and incentives. Development is considered as happenings accidentally to our African states. When you look at Government programmes and policies, they do not describe the nature of development that should be put in place in Africa. Largely, African development, presently, may not be controlled by Africans.

– Benon Nabaasa, Uganda.

Benon B Nabaasa is a pastoralist, graduate student in the Department of Geography, GeoInformatics and Climatic Sciences and researcher at the Urban Action Lab (UAL) of Makerere University, Uganda



Photo Credit; Deji Akinpelu/AFD



Disempowerment - whether defined in terms of a lack of self-confidence, apathy, fear, or an inability to take charge of one's own life - is perhaps the most unrecognised problem in Africa today.

- Wangari Maathai

In trying to explain this linkage, I was inspired by a traditional African tool that has three legs and a basin to sit on. To me the three legs represent three critical pillars of just and stable societies. The first leg stands for democratic space, where rights are respected, whether they are human rights, women's rights, children's rights, or environmental rights. The second represents sustainable and equitable management and resources. And the third stands for cultures of peace that are deliberately cultivated within communities and nations. The basin, or seat, represents society and its prospects for development. Unless all three legs are in place, supporting the seat, no society can thrive. Neither can its citizens develop their skills and creativity. When one leg is missing, the seat is unstable; when two legs are missing, it is impossible to keep any state alive; and when no legs are available, the state is as good as a failed state. No development can take place in such a state either. Instead, conflict ensues.

- Wangari Maathai, Unbowed

Prof Wangari Maathai (1940 - 2011) was a Kenyan social, environmental and political activist, and the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize



Photo Credit: Deji Akinpelu/AFD

Development is a hybrid term for a myriad of strategies adopted for socio-economic and environmental transformation from current states to desired ones (Pearson, 2000)

Pearson, R. (2000). „Rethinking Gender Matters in Development“, in Allen, T. & Thomas, A. (eds.). Poverty and Development into the 21st Century. Oxford: Oxford University Press
Ruth Pearson is Emeritus Professor of Development Studies at Leeds University

If you are going to experience changes tomorrow, you probably see a foreigner there, or you see a foreign firm, or you think that oh, they are bringing in foreign technology. In a place like China, when you get to construction sites, it is being championed by local company, employing local people, developing local infrastructure that matches with the needs and desires of the local people. That is what development is.

... Development is economic growth, plus advancements in human wellbeing. For you to say that this is development, then it must be human centered.

- Ayodele Shittu

Dr. Ayodele Shittu is a Nigerian development economist and youth entrepreneurship advocate

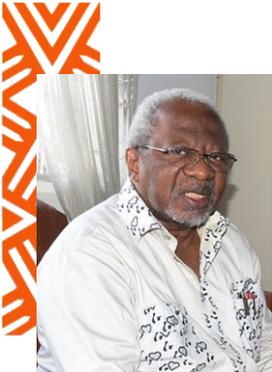
Although development is a link to the economies of a nation, I do not think that it ends with economic definitions. It goes to agencies, freedom to create and self actualisation... There are lots of structural barriers making it difficult for Africans. Looking at it from leadership perspectives, I am not too worried about how the rest of the world frames development as much as how African leaders think about development.

Emmanuel Adegboye

Emmanuel Adegboye is a Nigerian entrepreneur, technology and innovation enthusiast and Mo Ibrahim Foundation Academy Fellow at the Chatham House, London



Photo Credit: Deji Akinpelu/AFD



Regarding African views: What we need is a free, rational, critical evaluation and initiative of our living heritage and not a close up of our tradition into the past as if it were something dead, esoteric or inferior.

- Hountondji, P. J., 1983? 'Reason and Tradition', in Oruka. H. O. and Masola D. A. eds. Philosophy and Culture, Nairobi, Samkarge S., Samkarge T. and Hai

Professor Paulin Hountondji is a Beninese - French philosopher, politician and academic.

“The day will come when history will speak. But it will not be the history which will be taught in Brussels, Paris, Washington or the United Nations...Africa will write its own history and in both north and south it will be a history of glory and dignity”.

Letter from Thysville Prison to Mrs. Lumumba.

On the cultural plane, the new African states must make a serious effort to further African culture. We have a culture all our own, unparalleled moral and artistic values, an art of living and patterns of life that are ours alone. All these African splendors must be jealously preserved and developed. ‘We will borrow from Western civilization what is good and beautiful and reject what is not suitable for us. This amalgam of African and European civilization will give Africa a civilization of a new type, an authentic civilization corresponding to African realities.

- Patrice Lumumba

<https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/1959-patrice-lumumba-african-unity-and-national-independence/>

Patrice Lumumba (1925 - 1961) was a Congolese politician and first Prime Minister of the independent Democratic Republic of the Congo.

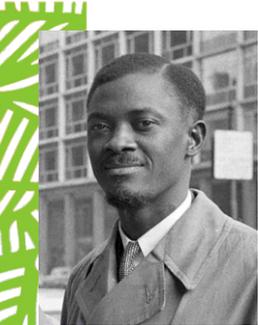




Photo Credit; Deji Akinpelu/AFD



I want you to know that development, according to African concept, is movement towards excellence, and the excellence in man is to be able to realise himself properly and live a good life. Man's own proper function is to reason, it follows then, that man's virtue is excellence and thereby his movement towards development lies in reasoning

– Olugboyega Alaba

Olugboyega Alaba is a Nigerian Professor of Yoruba Literature and cultural studies.



Development, to me, is when people can fulfil their potential, when they can feel they are who they are, when they are respected for who they are. For me, that is development, rather than benchmarking

- Remy Sietchiping

Dr Remy Sietchiping is a Camerounian Geographer and Chief of Policy, Legislation and Governance Section at UN-Habitat (United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Nairobi Kenya)



Development starts with the appreciation of the fact that you are at a particular place and space and you want to enhance the quality of your life, preserving what is on ground. So, it is an endeavour to improve upon what you met on ground. You have to own what you want to develop. Development is a combination of your ambition to live a better life visibly, where you are. The benchmark to be used to determine what development is should be geopolitical.

- Debo Kotun, Lagos.

Debo Kotun is a novelist and social commentator



Photo Credit; Deji Akinpelu/AFD



Development can be defined in my own opinion, as successes in one's line. When you embark on a business and you are moving forward, it shows you are developing.

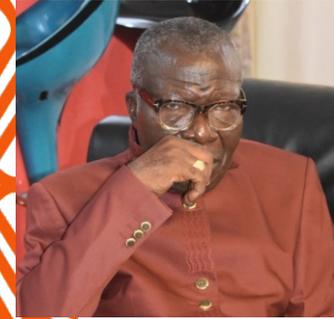
- Olubukola Lowo

Olubukola Lowo is a Herbalist based in Lagos, Nigeria

The closer they are to the government determines their development. Some don't roll with the government nor roll with anybody. They do things on their own - Development might not reach them.

- Gabriel Makinde

Gabriel Makinde is a Community leader at Ifo, a peri-urban community in Nigeria



All the people living in the vicinity benefit from development. There is Hausa, there is Igbo among neighbors, all of us are beneficiaries. Like our street for instance, we contributed 100,000 each for the constructions of a road, it is not done by the government. It is part of development. Where it came from nobody knows, except the contributors.

- Lateef Ajiga

Baale Lateef Ajiga is a Community leader in Iwaya, - an urban community, Lagos state, Nigeria



Photo Credit: Deji Akinpelu/AFD



Development is the ability of the people to recognise their environment and be able to manipulate resources therein sustainably to their own benefit overtime. It is a local process. It is only when people participate in their local environment that they can benefit from those resources

- Edmund Were

Edmond Were is Associate Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at Kisii University, Kenya



In order to effect development in a society, it is important to approach such community, understand their needs and aspirations then to initiate projects that will promote their interests. Development should be bottom-up.

- Samwel Obuchi

Dr. Samuel M. Obuchi is Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts & Social Sciences, Department of Kiswahili and other African Languages, Moi University, Kenya

To understand something so antithetical to conventional wisdom as the idea that Africa is the key to our global future, it is helpful to understand something equally remote from standard Western narratives about the world: how extraordinarily central Africa was to the very creation of our familiar world.

- Howard French

<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/30072/africa-is-central-to-the-modern-world-s-future-and-its-past>

Howard French is an American journalist, photographer and Professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.





Photo Credit; Deji Akinpelu/AFD



In the African context, development is the state of improved lifestyle or way of doing things, individually or collectively, which is premised on traditional values, norms, and other socio-cultural elements. Development in Africa should be perceived through the prism of the African model which entails traditional knowledge and belief systems and practices, and the continent's socio-cultural heritages. And since African history is replete with high points of development in areas such as socio-economic, political, and even science and technology, there is the need to converge the African model with the western ideal.

- Moses Yakubu

Dr Moses Yakubu is a historian and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of African and Diaspora studies, University of Lagos.



So, what I first think of whenever I hear someone say development is that I think about it in terms of historical background to how the word itself is used. Because usually, people don't even ask the question: developed from what into what? What am I now? And then what am I supposed to be developing into? Do we tend to ask the question that: is what I am supposed to be developing into in my interests? Or is it in the interest of those who are pushing whatever types of development narratives there may be? For instance, what I wear is actually economic warfare. It's not just that thing it looks cute, or it looks nice is that I've ascertained that here is something that will be beneficial to the economy of black people to wear things that are made by black people.

- Obadele Kambon, Accra

Dr Obadele Kambon is a linguist, Senior Research Fellow and Head of the Language, Literature and Drama Section of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana



Photo Credit: Deji Akinpelu/AFD



Africa must revert to what it was before the imperialists divided it. These are artificial divisions which we, in our pan-African concept, will seek to remove.

- Robert Mugabe

Robert Mugabe (1924 - 2019) was the President of Zimbabwe (1987 - 2017)



With the partition of Africa in the 19th century, European powers had decided that the Earth in its entirety belonged to them. They were its true owners, and they could occupy lands that were populated by foreign people. They could exploit these lands as well as the people who had always inhabited them, thereby carving out spheres of influence each of them had control over.

- Achille Mbembe

<https://www.newframe.com/thoughts-on-the-planetary-an-interview-with-achille-mbembe/>

Prof Achille Mbembe is a Cameroonian philosopher, political theorist, and public intellectual.

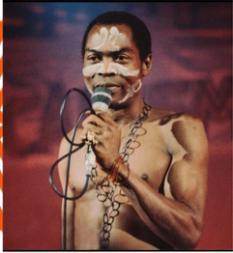
An even bigger problem is that the people of Africa and other parts of the colonized world have gone through a cultural and psychological crisis and have accepted, at least partially, the European version of things. That means that the African himself has doubts about his capacity to transform and develop his natural environment. With such doubts, he even challenges those of his brothers who say that Africa can and will develop through the efforts of its own people.

- Walter Rodney



Walter Rodney (1942 – 1980) was a Guyanese historian, political activist and academic. He authored the book *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*





I must identify myself with Africa, then I will have an identity Look, we're very backward. The African continent is degenerating into what I call the era of second slavery. And it's caused by a conspiracy of Western Governments on one side and illegal African Governments on the other side, operating without a constitution. My government is like that, a military Government that runs the country by decree."

- Fela

Fela Anikulapo Kuti (1938 - 1997) was a nigerian multi-instrumentalist, bandleader, composer, political activist and Pan Africanist



Photo Credit; Deji Akinpelu/AFD



Africa's story has been written by others; we need to own our problems and solutions and write our story. In Africa today, we recognise that trade and investment, and not aid, are pillars of development.

- Paul Kagame

Paul Kagame is the President of Rwanda



Africans... they are tired. They're tired of being the subject of everybody's charity and care. We are grateful, but we know that we can take charge of our own destinies if we have the will to reform.

- Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is a Nigerian-American economist and global development expert. She is also the Director-General of the World Trade Organization



Africa does not need your sympathy or Overseas Development Assistance. Africa needs a fair chance to trade with the rest of the world and amongst ourselves.

– John Mahama

John Mahama was the President of Ghana (2012 - 2017)



Photo Credit; Deji Akinpelu/AFD



The notion that aid can alleviate systemic poverty, and has done so, is a myth. Millions in Africa are poorer today because of aid; misery and poverty have not ended but increased. Aid has been, and continues to be, an unmitigated political, economic, and humanitarian disaster for most parts of the developing world.

- Dambisa Moyo

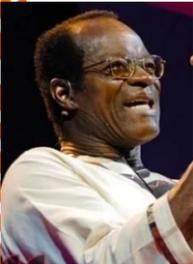
Dambisa Felicia Moyo is a Zambian-born economist and author, known for her analysis of macroeconomics and global affairs.



"Under its current form, that is imperialism-controlled, debt is a cleverly managed reconquest of Africa, aiming at subjugating its growth and development through foreign rules. Thus, each one of us becomes the financial slave, which is to say a true slave." "We must learn to live the African way. It's the only way to live in freedom and with dignity

- Thomas Sankara

Thomas Sankara (1949 - 1987) was a Burkinabe military officer, Marxist revolutionary and pan-Africanist President of Burkina Faso (1983 - 1987)



The solutions to Africa's problems lie in Africa, not in Live Aid concerts.

- George Ayittey

George Ayittey is a Ghanaian economist and widely-recognized authority on political economic development in Africa.



Photo Credit; Deji Akinpelu/AFD



The people's Priorities for African Development



These priorities were collated from the analysis of the project related public survey, interviews and multi-stakeholder workshops.

Highest ranked priorities: Education; Poverty Reduction, Security, Infrastructure and social services, Human Rights including gender, Good governance/ Institutional Reforms



Photo Credit; Deji Akinpelu/AFD

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