

Cultural Cooperation as a Dimension of Development Cooperation

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1. The opening address of the first SADCC conference on Culture and Information in Arusha on November 25-28, 1991 was touching upon a very important aspect, as what is the concept of culture. We fail to conceptualize culture as it is so close to us and we do not recognize its importance and role in what else we do in coping with our today's tasks of living in the environment we are in and part of. The speaker went on by stating that yet it is culture that determines our spiritual, material, intellectual, civil and emotional features and the very direction and type of development and civilization. Culture is responsible for the peace and sobriety you find in any society while it can also be a buffer against alien intellectual, moral and, aesthetic infiltration. A society without cultural coherence is easily penetrated and disrupted.

2. Development cooperation as a concept is not a very old issue. We are not far from the truth if we say that development cooperation in its present form started when the United Nations was created and present modalities were developed during the past thirty years. As the development has only in the recent years been seen increasingly from the sustainability point of view, also the long-term target-setting has gained more emphasis. The quality of aid has become more important than the quantitative aspects. Despite the fact that many aided projects and programmes have been implemented according to the plans, desired results have not been reached, however. Sustainable development results and economic betterment have not always been reached. Environmental aspects and cultural factors have been those new dimensions which have been analyzed when the reasons for partial failures in development cooperation have been discussed.

3. United Nations has been a forerunner in creating a conducive atmosphere for taking cultural dimensions into active care in the development endeavour. Years 1988-97 were declared a decade of international cultural development. Foundation for this was laid in Mexico 1982 in UNESCO's World Conference on Cultural Policies where emphasis was put on human resources' development and spiritual and cultural needs of people as complementary to the material needs. This policy was interpreted into following targets:

- making room in development for cultural dimensions
- strengthening the cultural identity

- widening the participation in cultural activities
- stimulating creativity in the arts
- emphasizing international cultural cooperation.

These objectives were supposed to be included in national cultural programmes, but especially they should be taken into account in development cooperation programmes.

4. Before going deeper into analysis on what is meant by cultural dimensions in development, a clarification on the term 'culture' is needed.

"By culture is meant every aspect of life: know-how, technical knowledge, customs of food and dress, religion, mentality, values, language, symbols, sociopolitical and economic behaviour, indigenous methods of taking decisions and exercising power, methods of production and economic relations, and so on."

This has been said on culture by the International South-North-Network on Cultures and Development Organization, one of the grass-root organisations active on cultural cooperation in the development.

Lome III analyzes culture from the artpoint of view on one hand and from the cultural force point of view on the other hand. The former means cooperation on individual sectors of art and cultural life, whereas the latter is as expression larger, covering cooperation which takes into account social life of the community, traditions and life styles. If the word 'culture' gets this content it becomes an engine and driving force of the society which also has an unification effect in it. Culture means here the basis of the society but also a target of it. This view on the culture supports the model where a man is in the focus of development.

Cultural cooperation within development cooperation activities can be implemented in the following areas:

- preservation and transmission of cultural heritage
- assistance for new forms of cultural expressions
- exchange programmes
- emphasizing cultural aspects as integral part of development cooperation programmes.

Many donor countries have taken cultural cooperation as one separate sector in their cooperation rather than a dimension for the whole work they are engaged in the country they cooperate with. This is becoming a problem as I think that the understanding of cultural dimensions within development cooperation do not only mean some individual projects on our list of programmes but more and more some kind of understanding of the cultural background of both actors in this process.

5. Development cooperation is very often understood as a financial machinery which is available for any kind of needs which may come across within the donor-receipient-relation. Aid-funds are scarce and more and more national byrocracy has been engaged on it in both ends and in the international fora, let alone the various conditions.

In the SADCC Conference on Cultural Cooperation in Arusha, two main interdependent reasons were put foward as obstacles for increasing cultural cooperation among the SADCC member countries:

- the lack of recognition of the place and role of culture in development and therefore
- the lack of giving enough financial support to the culture within the government financies.

The conference was trying to discuss various options for increasing the national awareness of the place and role of the culture in development and in this analysis they tried to avoid discussion on so called donor-financing as the primary source of funding. I was glad to read the text as I do not believe that any major donor-driven activity can stand without a deep national involvement both as will and as financial contribution.

6. In the following lines I try to draft a programme for any given country, where cultural aspects are taken into account as integral part of the programme. I am following the emphasis outlined above in chapter 4:

- preservation and transmission of cultural heritage
- assistance for new forms of cultural expressions
- exchange programmes
- emphasising cultural aspects as integral part of development cooperation programmes

6.1. Preservation and transmission of cultural heritage

As an example I could mention SADCC/ICCROM cooperation on preserving the inhabited ancient town areas in eastern Africa, such as Ilia de Mozambique, Zanzibar stone town, Lamu etc. These towns belong to the cultural heritage of the mankind and deserve therefore a special care and attention by the world.

It should not only be the historical monuments we should pay attention to within our joint efforts. Many natural history reserves need increasing attention by the world, such as Usambara mountains with their endemic nature, to mention only one of this kind of areas of internationally known targets of "man and biosphere"-programme.

6.2. Assistance for new forms of cultural expressions and exchange programmes

I had a special purpose to bind these two together. Within cultural cooperation one is unable to create new forms of cultural expressions unless one is allowed to get ideas and impressions from other people near or far away. It is said that the world has become smaller, but we have to note that it may be smaller to those who can afford it. The greatest artists, poets and composers of my country did travel within the boundaries of those days. Our young people do travel much more than we did when we were younger. Has this opportunity been made available for the young people in Tanzania, for young artists, dancers, teachers? To go abroad does not always mean to go overseas. A visit to a neighbour country may be equally rewarding. It may be in many ways even more rewarding if there could be continuity in the cultural relations between the countries and their artists.

I hope that this seminar will bring along new ideas, workable and why not even nonworkable ideas for new forms of cultural expressions. I am sure that interaction between scientists and scholars is the only way to analyse what can be done in the future for, say, the Kiswahili research of our time.

6.3. Emphasizing cultural aspects as integral part of development cooperation programmes

Donors often (as a rule always) represent governments and normally deal with requests from the governments. They are, of course, likely to have prejudices when approaching a local people and culture with which they often are unfamiliar. The administrators of the developing country have been brought up equally in an environment where there are rumours, myths and beliefs about other groups. How much the actors in negotiations on the aid and development programmes understand their own cultures, their own national traditions and their own home regions? And still they are dealing within everyday administration with matters which definitely have something to do with the relevance of those. We as administrators are also far away from the needs and representatives of the local community, as regards not only geographical distance but also lifestyles and values. Any careful evaluation on aided programmes carries out a concern over this aspect. Blue-print planning approach does plan the programme above the heads of the people, or as we say, the target group. It is not only the need of donor community to assess the situation with great care, but also the developing countries should re-examine themselves in order to solve their problems, at the same time recognizing their own values, so that technical cooperation invited fits into the needs and complements and stimulates local initiative, aspirations and awareness. There is a need to marry the national goals with the goals of the community before the needs are defined to the donors. Otherwise "no amount of aid can help the African crisis".

I hope that I have stated it very clearly that main emphasis in the development cooperation in the future will lay on the importance of the cultural dimensions of the cooperation. Many costly programmes have been failed from their objectives as there has not been clear analysis on the human resources development based on the careful studies on these aspects in large. I would sometimes be ready to suggest that there has not always been interest to study the matters in depth, as maybe sometimes these costly programmes would not have been realized, if careful analysis had been made or the timespan of them and methods of implementation had been far different of those which were accepted.