

Researching Women, Development, and Peace in Africa: Navigating Between the Classroom, the Field, and the Public Sector

By Precious Kassey Garba

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ABOUT THE SERIES

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As I reflected on the topic of this keynote address, I decided to share my experiences navigating between the classroom (learning and teaching), the field (living and researching), and public service (institutions, functioning, and coordination). Development, peacebuilding, and women have been important subjects encountered throughout my working life. I am convinced that sharing my experiences would be more useful than some abstract theoretical analysis with extensive systematization and evaluation of a diverse set of theories, opinions, and assertions.

My experiences provided valuable insights into the challenges of development, peacemaking, and the constraints of uplifting the lives of all women, men, and children on the threshold of social, economic, and political justice and equity. My experiences also provided me with insights into the possibilities for successfully engineering development, peace, and the well-being of women in Nigeria and the rest of Africa, reaching the previously mentioned threshold. In sharing my experiences, I highlight some of the potential paths towards addressing emerging challenges, including solutions and the type of learning, teaching, researching, and public sector functioning and participation that could bring about development, peace, and the well-being of all in Africa, highlighting women in particular.

First, I shall begin by speaking briefly about three issues, viz, solution orientation, one interdependent humanity, and reciprocity, because of their significance in my experience. Second, I briefly discuss context and the six keywords of the title of the keynote lecture, viz: women, development, peace, classroom, field, and public sector. Third, I reflect on some of the highlights of my experiences navigating between the classroom, the field, and the public sector. I end with some concluding remarks.

Solution Orientation, One Interdependent Humanity, and Reciprocity

Solution Orientation

Something I learnt in my navigation is that classroom experiences are not equipping Africans to have a unified understanding of reality. They are not given the tools to integrate faith with reason, knowledge with subject content, and contextual issues within a global classroom.¹ It is a fact that Western concepts, contexts, and philosophies dominate the curriculum, along with narratives about development and underdevelopment, peace and conflict, women and men.² Thus, in the classroom (teaching and learning), field (understanding reality through research), and public sector (institutions, functioning, and coordination), learners and teachers see themselves—their issues with development, conflict, peace, women, men, etc.—from the lenses of the most influential western leaders of thoughts (intellectual, business, and/or political elites).

Research on development, peace, and women frequently adopts problem statements more than problem-solving approaches. However, problem statements do not solve problems: they state a problem as understood by a researcher. There is no guarantee that the problem stated is the real problem; it could also not be the *only* problem. In such settings, problem statements are guided by “received” ideas, theories, and other forms of speculation about “realities” that do not come from the field itself. The field is often a place for the testing of prejudiced ideas, theories, and speculations, some of which are used by researchers to convert a stated problem into a set of hypotheses they test with data collected from the field.

It is essential to transition from problem-oriented research to solution-oriented research. Though understanding the true nature of a problem is part of the process, unless the right choices and actions are taken at the right time, the problem will remain unsolved. One question we all should reflect on is: Why has development, peace, and the improved well-being of women remained an elusive reality for Africa, despite all the growth in the number of graduates, research, refereed papers, books, conferences, seminars, academic and professional promotions, and consultancies in the fields of development, peace, and women studies?

As we reflect on this question, we must also reexamine the global educational philosophy, including its context, concepts, theology, and epistemological standards, through the lenses of Africans’ realities before and after their colonial experiences. We must then start to work towards a “unified understanding of reality: integrating faith with reason, knowledge with subject content, and contextual issues within a global classroom.”³

One Interdependent Humanity

I believe in one interdependent humanity. I believe the creation story in the Bible. I also believe that in Christ, all human beings are one: “In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Greek or a Jew, circumcised or not. It doesn't matter if you speak a different language or even if you are a Scythian. It doesn't matter if you are a slave or free. Christ is all that matters, and he is in all of you.”⁴ I am not ashamed of my faith in God, my belief in Jesus Christ, or my dependence on the Holy Spirit. My faith is real as I am real.⁵

By divine design, women, men, and children are supposed to be coexisting in virtuous relationships. However, human beings have built walls of separation and hierarchies—education, sex, race, class, etc. The walls were intentionally and strategically designed to divide humanity by those who seek power to achieve agendas that are evil and destructive, both to themselves and humanity. Moreover, how the “dividing and ruling” persons or groups acquire power, wealth, fame, and the massive and insatiable appetites that drive them, make development, equity, justice, well-being, and peace impossible for all human beings, including themselves.

Reciprocity

Because humanity is one and interdependent, countries are also interdependent. In addition, the relationships and fellowships between human beings, and between states/countries, are characterized by reciprocity: the idea of development and underdevelopment being two sides of the same coin—global political economy. Similarly, disproportionately wealthy people, groups, or states, and the disproportionate poverty of people, groups, or states, are also two sides of the same global political economy. Understanding why some persons, groups, and states are developed and wealthy is connected to the understanding of why other persons, groups, and states are underdeveloped and poor. However, in much of the existing literature on peace, development, and women in Africa, inequitable conditions and paths of African development, peace, and the well-being of Africans are often portrayed as the results of some inherent inadequacy in Africans and Africa.

If relationships and fellowships are symmetrical and balanced, they would produce equitable outcomes. When relationships (connections) and fellowships (interactions) are asymmetrical, they produce asymmetrical outcomes. For example, the relationship between a colonizing state and the colonized people is inherently unequal. The colonizing government will forcefully appropriate (steal, plunder, or pillage) and repatriate the wealth of the colonized state and people. This forceful appropriation and repatriation of stolen wealth make the colonizing state wealthier and the colonized people poorer. Therefore, the wealth of the colonizing state and the poverty of the colonized people are two sides of the same set of actions (colonization, appropriation, and repatriation of wealth).

The idea of reciprocity is the conventional view of externalities and its solutions in economics, proposed by Ronald Coase in 1960.⁶ The idea of reciprocity is also entrenched as a pillar of international trade architecture and was codified, first in the General Agreement on Trade and Tariff (GATT) and in its successor, the World Trade Organization (WTO). Reciprocity in international trade involves countries granting each other “mutual concessions in tariff rates, quotas, or other commercial restrictions.” The US and its allies (Western Europe, Japan, South Korea, Canada, and Mexico) often agree to reduce tariffs and eliminate other trade barriers mutually.

In contrast, a transparent principle of reciprocity—proposed by John Maynard Keynes at the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference⁷—that would have benefited less powerful countries was rejected by the Americans. Keynes proposed that reciprocity was necessary in solving balance of payment problems. His point was that countries with a balance of payments surplus and those with a balance of payments deficit should simultaneously adjust to correct global balance of payments imbalances. However, the representatives of the United States brought military, economic, and political power and influence to reject the idea of reciprocity and to impose a one-sided adjustment as the rule for “solving” the balance of payment problems. This shifted the burden of adjustment unfairly on countries with deficits, even when the deficits are triggered by the economic and political policies of the countries accumulating surpluses. The one-sided adjustment rule has been applied to many less powerful countries since the Bretton Woods System came into operation. It would be useful for some researchers to analyze and estimate the effects of the rule on African countries, particularly from the 1980s.

In 1985 and 1987, the US government, under pressure from farmers and manufacturers hurt by the strong US Dollar, used its economic and military power to persuade Britain, France, Germany, and Japan to adjust their respective currencies to improve the competitiveness of American farmers and industrialists. The United States convened a meeting of treasury and finance ministers of France, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and (former) West Germany, and the outcome came to be known as the Plaza Accord.⁸ The Plaza Accord was signed jointly on September 22, 1985, by the five finance ministers, “to depreciate the U.S. dollar against the French franc, the German Deutsche Mark, the Japanese Yen, and the British Pound Sterling, by intervening in currency markets.” Later in 1987, the Louvre Accord was signed by the finance ministers and governors of the central banks of Canada, France, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and West Germany to reverse the depreciation of the US dollar and the instability in international capital markets caused by the Plaza Accord.⁹ The Plaza Accord was signed jointly on September 22, 1985, by the five finance ministers, “to depreciate the U.S. dollar against the French franc, the German Deutsche Mark, the Japanese Yen, and the British Pound Sterling, by intervening in currency markets.”

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It would also be interesting to study the effects of the two agreements on the economies of Canada, France, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and West Germany in the 1990s. It would also be essential to study the impact of the two accords on development, peace, and the well-being of women in Africa.

The examples of how the US has historically responded to the idea of a reciprocal balance of payment adjustments demonstrate how the most powerful nations use the asymmetries in the global political economy to achieve their objectives. It is also an example of how misleading classroom economic ideas can be: while classroom teachers are busy teaching about “free enterprise” and that exchange rates are determined freely, the reality is that powerful nations deploy their economic, political, and military power to pressure the world, and to control and manipulate market forces that will produce the outcomes powerful elites desire.

Despite this gap between classroom teachings and sociopolitical and socioeconomic realities, the classroom continues to downplay or ignore reciprocity in human relationships and interactions, including how economic and military power shape them. Issues of development, peace, and women’s rights are treated as if they are non-reciprocal; a problem of the disadvantaged. In all cases, a solution gives prominence to the “benevolence” of the advantaged party or nation. However, the advantaged party or nation is driven by the “spirit of capitalism.” The spirit of capitalism is hostile to benevolence. Yet, powerful nations use it to conceal their true intentions, marketing themselves as rescuers to lure their victim nations—including their respective peoples—into the trap of sovereign debt. The sponsors of the Washington Consensus marketed the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) as a program that would change the structure of the economy and promote sustainable economic growth. However, SAP did not positively restructure the economy.

Context and Concepts

Context

Context is fundamental for understanding the location, cultural norms, institutions, incentive systems, and other unique attributes of human communities.

It would be difficult to understand the concepts of development, peace, and the status of women in any society outside the context of their institutions, processes of development and peacemaking, and the roles women play in those institutions and processes.

It will also be intellectually arrogant of me to impose the context of my people on people whose contexts are uniquely different from my own. Thus, in Figure 1 below, I specify my understanding of the relationships between women, development, and peace, and emphasize that all three would best be understood with a holistic political economy that is both local and global.

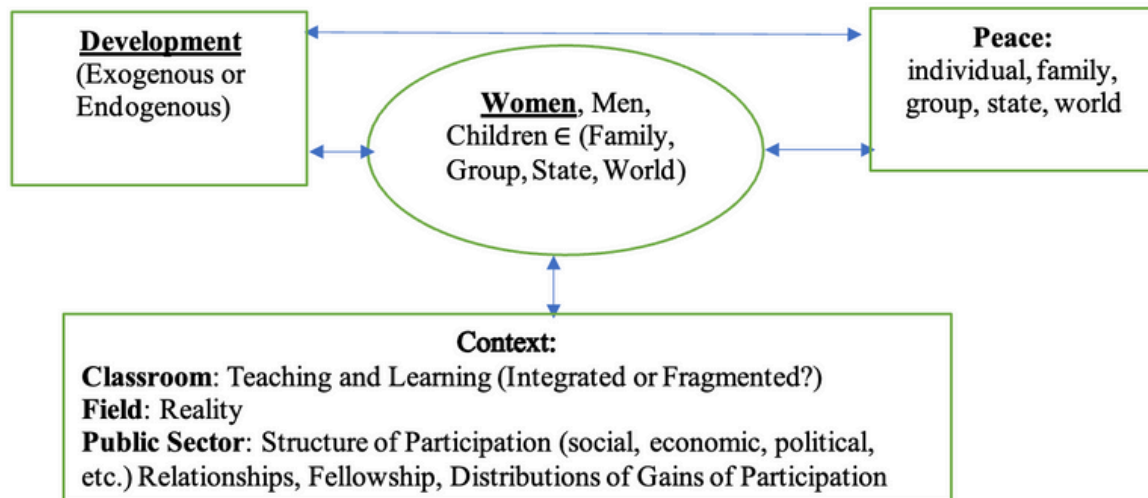


Figure 1: Contextualization of the Key Words and their Relations

The context for understanding the nexus between women, development, and peace can be found in the classroom, the field, and the public sector. Of the three, women, especially their relationships and fellowships with men and children, are at the core of development and peace. Women are members of families, groups, polities (states), and the global community of human beings. Because women, men, and children all make up families, social/economic/political groups, nations, and the broader world, development and peace are neither possible nor meaningful without women.

Women are real. They are not abstract, like the so-called “economic man” that economists used in preaching messages of greed, selfishness, and the accumulation of earthly wealth. Human beings cannot be abstract because the world is not abstract—neither peace, conflict, nor the well-being of our fellow human beings. Thus, to abstract any of these realities is to deflect from reality—chasing after the winds.

The matters of development, peace, and the well-being of women are matters of life and death for many.

However, scholars use their analytical license to engage in abstract theorizing for career growth as they react to an incentive system in the classroom, in research, and in the public sector that rewards those who engage in abstract theorizing, particularly in economics. While abstract theorizing may demonstrate a researcher's intelligence or brilliance among their peers, this impressiveness proves sterile if such theorizing fails to address the urgent needs of African people for development, peace, and well-being. As we navigate between the classroom, the field, and the public sector in search of solutions, and even as we apply them, we must not forget the question I raised earlier: *Why has development, peace, and the improved well-being of women remained an elusive reality for Africa?*

We must also reflect on the classroom experience that produces “Macaulayan graduates.” These are graduates named after their promoter, Thomas Macaulay Babington, who intended for a Macaulayan educational system to make a class of interpreters and servile intermediaries between the colonizer and the colonized people. Macaulayan graduates were expected to be “a class of persons that were local only in blood and color, but English (foreign) in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and intellect.”⁹ The Macaulayan system creates disconnections between the classroom and field, the classroom and public sector, and the public sector and field. The class of Macaulayan ruling elites is more likely to see themselves in the mold of colonizers, and view the people as colonized rather than as their principals. The Macaulayan Administrative elites are also more likely to see themselves as superior to the non-hybrids, or “traditional” Africans. Such elites are less likely to transform the classroom, field, and public sector in ways that promote development, peace, and the well-being of women, men, and children in Africa.

Concepts

Words matter. Ideas matter. Understanding the meaning of words that convey ideas is essential to understanding the ideas. Philip K. Dick made this point in the following words:

“The basic tool for the manipulation of reality is the manipulation of words. If you can control the meaning of words, you can control the people who must use them.”¹⁰

No one or no group has the inalienable right to manipulate the world by manipulating reality to control people and to amass power. This is why I briefly define a few key words to reflect reality to the best of my abilities.

The first keyword is adult female. A woman is “an adult female human being.” I am an adult female human being. I am a woman. Women—like me, and of other backgrounds and ages—make up at least 50% of the global population.

There can be no development or peace without the equitable and effective participation of women. In Christ, “a person is no longer a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a male or a female” because “Christ is all, and in all.”¹¹ However, outside of Christ, human beings have been building divisive and destructive “walls” of conflict, war, colonialism, imperialism, and genocide. These are ways of sacrificing human lives for power, fame, wealth, and to attempt to satisfy the insatiable passions of appetite.

Development is defined in economics as growth in output plus changes in the structures of the economy. The structure of the economy shifts from primary to secondary output, then it shifts with services supplanting secondary output as the dominant contributor to production. From a Biblical lens, development is not about the possessions of things. Jesus Christ warned his disciples, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”¹² The Bible also teaches that “godliness with contentment is great gain” and that “we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world.”¹³ Furthermore, “If we have food and clothing, with these we will be content,”¹⁴ warning that “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction” and that “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”¹⁵

Therefore, development cannot be viewed strictly in terms of things. Instead, development should be understood in terms of the intrinsic, virtuous qualities of human beings, and the virtuous qualities of their relationships and fellowships with God, and the virtuous qualities of their relationships and fellowships with other human beings. Economists promote vices of greed, self-centeredness, covetousness, and hedonism in the classroom, field, and the public and private sectors, on both a national and international level. Using the gospel of scarcity, economists and the powerful elites that fund their work have led humanity into an endless and destructive struggle to accumulate wealth, acquire power, and achieve fame. These struggles have made global economic stability and peace, as well as the development of many countries, impossible.

Ohiorhenuan (2003)¹⁶ conceptualized development as a journey, what a society considers it to be; an endogenous process generated and sustained by the energy and ability of the people to learn creatively from history. Ohiorhenuan's conceptualization of endogenous development means that human beings in a society must own and drive their development process through learning, innovation, and adaptation. The idea of endogenous development is the exact opposite of the idea of exogenous development, on which the sovereign lending and borrowing industry was built.

Although orthodox economists have shifted from exogenous to endogenous growth, the beneficiaries of development continue to insist that the development of their client nations must be externally driven by foreign technical assistance and foreign capital goods, paid for by sovereign borrowing from bilateral, multilateral, and private creditors. Countries like Nigeria have significantly increased foreign borrowings despite their tragic experiences of 1982 – 2006, and the sacrifices in terms of development, peace, and well-being.

Peace begins within individuals before it can spread to a family, a group, a society, a state, and ultimately, globally. The Bible makes a distinction between the peace that Jesus Christ gives and the peace of the world. As Jesus prepared his disciples for the end of his earthly mission, he said to them, “I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and the heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”¹⁷ The peace that Jesus gives is the confident assurance that frees a person’s mind and heart from “fear of the present or the future.” It gives a person the strength to overcome sin, fear, uncertainty, doubt, and numerous other forces that are at war within them.

However, world peace is defined as the absence of conflict or war. However, the absence of conflict or war is almost impossible when human beings are driven or led by their flesh. **James 4:1-4** makes this very clear.

James 4:1-4 Why do you fight and argue with each other? Isn't it because you are full of selfish desires that fight to control your body? **James 4:2** You want something you don't have, and you will do anything to get it. You will even kill! But you still cannot get what you want, and you won't get it by fighting and arguing. You should pray for it. **James 4:3** Yet even when you do pray, your prayers are not answered, because you pray just for selfish reasons. **James 4:4** You people aren't faithful to God! Don't you know that if you love the world, you are God's enemies? And if you decide to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.¹⁸

Garba and Garba¹⁹ pointed out that “conflict exists when antithetical forces struggle for supremacy or strategic advantages” and that conflict was “either open (when antithetical forces fight) or inherent (an inner struggle).” They provided examples of antithetical forces that individuals confront: passion versus prudence, mind versus matter, duty-to-God versus duty-to-state, good versus evil, and so on. They made three claims. First, that “the history of human societies is replete with antithetical forces.” These included state vs. citizens; social cohesion vs. individual liberty; order vs. anarchy; church vs. the king; Catholicism vs. Protestantism, slave vs. masters; aristocrat vs. commoner; colonizer vs. colonized; western values vs. African values; tradition vs. modernity; science vs. religion; north vs. south; east vs. west; rich vs. poor; military vs. civil; socialism vs. communism; capitalists vs. workers; debtors vs. creditors; unlimited wants vs. limited resources; and so on.

Second, these antithetical forces create conflicts that are “inherent within a human being” and “in relations between humans at every level.” Third, that “much of the revolutionary changes in the course of human history were due to open conflicts within and between human communities.”

Much human effort has been devoted to Peace and Conflict Studies (analysis of violent and non-violent behaviors, structural mechanisms promoting violent and non-violent social conflicts); Peace Studies (study of de-escalation, conflict transformation, disarmament and cessation of violence to prevent, de-escalate, and solve conflicts), and War Studies (study of efficient attainment of victory in conflicts). Like development studies and women's studies, the goals of peace studies remain elusive within the global community of human beings. It is of interest to truthfully evaluate what development studies, women studies, and peace studies have genuinely accomplished, and how equitable, just, and sustainable the achievements (both overt and covert) have been.

Navigating

Classroom Experiences

My classroom experiences were culturally and intellectually diverse. My basic education (primary and secondary) was in Nigeria, undergraduate and post-graduate studies in the United States, and the PhD programme in Nigeria. Post-doctoral fellowships and visiting appointments took me to universities and institutes in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada, and the United States of America.

The basic education (primary and secondary) was Macaulayan in content and agenda. We were punished for speaking our mother tongue to keep us speaking English at all times. The curriculum was designed to make us look up to Britain and to look down on our Africanness; to make us cultivate English and foreign tastes, etiquette, opinions, morals, and intellect. We learned about the history of conquerors who told lies about Africans, such as Mungo Park's claim of discovering the River Niger, which was based on a map that inaccurately represented Africa's size in both absolute and relative terms. In addition, we acquired spoken, reading, writing, and numerical skills in English, but not in our mother tongues, and we also learnt to mentally store information to pass exams and join the workforce, or proceed to the next educational level. The learning experience did not equip us with the skills to be innovative, productive, and patriotic citizens.

The undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum was designed to prepare us for integration into the capitalist system and to take our places in the workforce as replaceable workers, taxpayers, consumers, and borrowers. As a student, one was constrained to think within the boundaries of the curriculum and the authorities of the disciplines I studied.

At the same time, the thesis and dissertations I wrote were supervised by teachers who had their intellectual orientations and preferences. Consequently, the latitude for creative thinking and for researching outside defined boundaries was limited.

The diverse cultural influences through all the phases of my experiences in the classroom did not change the spirit of godliness, hard work, honesty, integrity, respect for people (especially elders), a sense of family, and of caring for others that my mother and the society I grew up in taught me. My experiences taught me that a person's ability to navigate life's challenges depends on the strength of the spiritual and social foundations their parents and society provided.

It was after graduation and becoming a teacher and researcher that I started to contend with the promoters of thoughts, values, and interests that were inimical to development, peace, and the well-being of women, men, and children. These contentions affected my research, my relationships with research networks and organizations, grant awarding institutions, and bilateral and multilateral institutions I related with. Though the contentions required forgoing some grants and consultancies, it was worthwhile to contend with ideas that I was convinced were intentionally designed to impede the development, cause conflict, and adversely affect the well-being of women, men, and children of Nigeria and Africa.

Every researcher has a moral responsibility to understand the trade-offs inherent in the research funding system—and to decide whether to be a tool against Africa or to stand for Africa and its people. As a Christian, I view the world, choices, and actions from Biblical lenses, which has helped me to see beyond the vanities of numbers of publications, career growth, fame, position, and wealth.

It was not only intellectuals who insisted on controlling how Africans think and act: Western bilateral and multilateral organizations are far more controlling. The idea of a “Washington Consensus” as the template for the structural adjustment of the economies of countries in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia (that were all cunningly led into debt traps) was deceitful even when evaluated against Keynesian economics. In Keynesian economics, deflationary policies are not appropriate in times of recession. This was why at the onset of the Great Recession in 2008, the US Congress passed the bi-partisan Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 that President George W. Bush signed on February 13, 2008.²⁰ The Act provided “for tax rebates to low and middle-income U.S. taxpayers, tax incentives to stimulate business investment, and an increase in the limits imposed on mortgages eligible for purchase by government-sponsored enterprises (e.g. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac)” at a projected cost of \$152 billion. About a year later, the US Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009²¹ (ARRA) that was signed into law by President Barack Obama in February 2009. The Recovery Act was passed to “save existing American jobs, create new ones (quickly), provide temporary relief programs for people most affected by the recession, and to invest in infrastructure, education, health, and renewable energy.”²²

It was initially estimated to cost \$787 billion when the Recovery Act was passed. However, the cost was revised to \$831 billion between 2009 and 2019.²³

The United States Federal Reserve, under Chairman Ben Bernanke and most Western central banks, also embarked on quantitative easing. The central banks expanded their balance sheets, purchased toxic assets from banks to restructure their balance sheets, and kept interest rates at near or equal to zero. The Washington Consensus recommended the exact opposite. It was not surprising that the SAP pushed many African countries into depression, higher external debts, lower public and private investment, deterioration in physical infrastructure, unemployment, conflicts, strikes, and, in some countries, coups, counter coups, and insurgencies. The same SAP opened up many of the latent conflicts in the weak colonial foundations of most African states. Many African countries have not recovered.

After more than 15 years of SAP's adverse economic, political, and social consequences, an organization that was part of the Washington Consensus invited me, in 1997, to evaluate the impact of the structural adjustment policies on African economies. However, I had to reject the consultancy offer. The reason was that the organization chose the methodology for the assignment and constrained me to using this chosen methodology. This action of the organization was unethical. To accept its terms would have compromised my ethical responsibilities as a scholar and my duty to Africa. It was clear that the assignment was to legitimize SAP, including the organizations, institutions, and governments that promoted it. Because of the significance of methodology to the credibility of a study, to accept an imposed methodology in exchange for money is to be a mercenary, not a scholar. The lesson for me is clear in **Mathew 8:36-37**: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" and "Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"²⁴

Development theories, such as the vicious cycle of poverty and the gap models, point to African and other marginalized nations as the cause of their underdevelopment. This type of diagnostics presents Africans as helpless people who must be assisted. This narrative is incompatible with Africa's precolonial history. The wealthy empires, city-states, and kingdoms of Africa did not require the assistance of others to accumulate wealth and develop their political, legal, scientific, and technological systems. Given the rich endowments of resources that God blessed all of Africa with, they do not need a "Jacob-Esau" type exchange of birthright for a pot of soup to develop.

My experiences and reflections about the "development game" convinced me that development finance was built on three myths. First, the thesis of the vicious cycle of poverty is a myth. Resource-rich countries that have a history of being wealthy before colonization, and with a sizable human population, could not be in a vicious cycle of poverty that condemned them to be dependent on foreign credit.

Second, the claim that external debt was necessary for development is also a myth. The evidence of the last seven decades conclusively disproves this myth. The third myth is the inverted U-hypothesis. It claims that inequities should be accepted because they are a necessary sacrifice that developing countries must make for their economies to grow, to the point where growth eventually reduces inequities. The evidence regarding inequities and growth disproves these myths, as did Keynes (1936)²⁵, when he concluded that the fundamental fault of a capitalist political economy was its failure to guarantee full employment and its arbitrary, unequal distribution of income. Keynes went further to suggest that because capitalist economies fail to guarantee full employment, they undermine peace in their struggles to export their economic problems to their neighbors.

Lessons from the Field

In the mid-1990s, we conducted a study of small and medium-scale garri (processed cassava flakes) processors. We drew up questionnaires and sent research assistants to administer them to garri processors in Ibadan. This study provided insight into the disconnect between researchers and the populations from which they draw samples and data for their qualitative or quantitative analysis, or triangulation. The feedback we received indicated that respondents were tired of researchers using them to collect data without fulfilling the promises made about the analysis producing interventions that would improve their lives.

We offered them incentives and analyzed the data. After analyzing the data, we reflected further on the feedback from the field. Our reflections led us to the conclusion that field research must go beyond simply getting information from respondents. It led us to propose an integrated research approach that involved research, intervention, and advocacy. This was how we thought it should work. First, researchers conduct baseline research to identify the most pressing constraints to the efficiency and returns of small-scale processors. In the “garri study,” the most pressing constraint was water shortage. Second, an intervention would be designed in collaboration with the small business owners. In the “garri study,” it could take the form of the provision of a borehole. Third, after a reasonable time has elapsed, during which the intervention is expected to have had some impact, a second research study would be undertaken to assess the effect of the intervention. Fourth, if the intervention was effective, it may be scaled up to support garri processors facing similar constraints. This may require advocacy not only to scale up but, more importantly, to persuade state agents to adopt a research approach that combines intervention, research, and advocacy when designing various small business intervention programs. We attempted to implement the idea through a registered NGO, named the Centre for Development Research, Intervention and Advocacy (CDRIA), but were unsuccessful, despite expending considerable resources to fulfill all registration requirements. We even bought some cassava peelers from the USA that we wanted to include as part of the intervention. The inability to register CDRIA derailed our plans.

Eventually, we had a different but similar interest, and we registered another NGO (Centre for Growth and Development), which focused on two prioritized programs, namely: Women Intervention Programme (WIP) and Youth Entrepreneurial Programmes (YEP). We deliberately chose not to ask for or receive grants for the programs from the formative stages of the NGO. One of the reasons was that we did not want any organization or person to control or divert us from the purpose of registering the NGO. We also had faith that God, who called us to service through the NGO, would provide the resources needed for the programs. We have no regrets.

My Public Sector Experiences

Background

Development, peace, and progressive improvements for the well-being of African women, men, and children have eluded Africa. For example, 30 of 33 low-development countries are in Africa, 16 are grouped among medium, and just 6 among the high human development.²⁶ Similarly, the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP) reported that only six African countries were free of state-based conflicts, non-state conflicts, or one-sided conflict.²⁷ These were Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Zambia, Mozambique, Botswana, and Namibia. UNICEF's data on maternal mortality between 2000 and 2020 show that the rates in Sub-Saharan Africa (536), Eastern and Southern Africa (324), and West and Central Africa (724) are the highest in the world. The women of Africa face significantly higher risks of dying from childbirth than their counterparts in other continents of the world. The fact that West and Central Africa, which have the most conflicts, also have the highest risk of maternal mortality suggests that peace and the well-being of women are strongly connected.

Yet, Africa has 30% of the world's reserves of mineral resources, occupies 20.5% of the global landmass, and has 17% of the global population compared to Asia, which has 29.8% of the landmass but with 59.4% of the global population. The state of African development, conflict, and problems facing African people are not caused by resource constraints.

My Experiences in the Public Sector

My appointment to the position of Chief Economic Adviser to President Goodluck Jonathan in 2010 came as a surprise. My principal allowed me to discuss the office's responsibilities and what I proposed to bring to the office before he announced the appointment. In addition, he approved the memo about restructuring the office to be effective in coordination and policy advisement after due research on the US Office of Management and Budget, the Council of Economic Advisers, and their mandates and operations.

The model provided for periodic briefings of the President by key appointees, so he could effectively monitor the deliverables of key Ministries, Departments, and Agencies. The President approved all the prayers of the memo, and this gave us the opportunity to structure and recruit experienced and highly capable professionals for the Office of the Chief Economic Adviser to the President (OCEAP).

The appointment was a unique opportunity to extend my navigational experiences to the public sector. Working in the public sector gave me firsthand experience observing how it functions: the economic, political, and security games at play; the players and their strategic interests; the solutions; and the strategic pay-off matrix. For the first time, I observed firsthand how what we learn and teach in the classrooms is disconnected from the way the public sector is structured and functions. It also gave me an insight into how contestations by special interests, Nigerian and foreign, could fragment the public sector and sever it from the interests of the citizens that political leaders swore oaths to serve. In the classrooms, we imagined the disconnect. But as a public servant, I experienced the disconnect and the contempt of some public servants for the citizens.

My colleagues and I, who worked with me in the Office, had the opportunity to work together to consistently make a case for coordination and for strengthening the inter-relationships across ministries, departments, agencies, and between federal and subnational governments that make up the public sector. We also adopted a Nigeria-first approach to public service. We were able to do that because our Principal shielded us from undue influences of politics.

We conducted evidence-based research grounded in the Nigerian context, wrote policy memos, and briefed our principal frequently. We received the support of the President to suspend consideration of requests for waivers until the government could develop a policy on waivers that would enhance national interests, competition, and collaborations when and where necessary. The President also accepted our memo advising against several schemes by some Nigerians who fronted for foreigners that neither had the interest of Nigeria nor the capacity, resources, or experience for what they proposed. We also conducted a study at the request of our principal on why Nigeria had fallen behind Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea, and based on our findings, we worked together with the guidance of our principal to propose a transformational plan pivoted on three pillars:

- First, transforming state agents is crucial because without a commitment to Nigeria, nothing good can be achieved.
- Second, transforming and coordinating state institutions to be efficient and effective, thereby avoiding duplication, waste, and opportunities for corruption.
- Third, leverage Nigeria's endowments to develop sustainable regional and national value chains based on effective and efficient collaborations between federal and subnational governments, research and innovation centres, and the private sector.

Our principal endorsed the proposal, and he led members of his government to a one-day interactive engagement with the organized business sector in June 2011 in Lagos. The proposal was generally applauded and accepted. However, we exited the government shortly thereafter.

Those who knew me did not expect me to last in the position of Chief Economic Adviser to the President (CEAP). When I came back to the university, some told me that they were not surprised. All I can share for now are six takeaways.

1. First, it was a worthwhile experience. It gave me some understanding of how the public service functions. These pressures are brought to bear on the President (by politicians, governors, legislators, foreign governments, bilateral and multilateral organizations, his cabinet, relatives, citizens, and so on). Because these pressures are mainly rooted in interests that conflict with those of the commonwealth, they make it difficult for a President to focus on the needs of the people and on building a nation capable of actualizing the ideas or vision expressed in the words of the National Anthem. It is important that the President, who is both the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and the Commander in Chief of the Economy, devise filters to minimize the pressures on the Office so that they could focus resources, time, and energies on fulfilling election promises through a well-thought-out visioning, and planning institutions and processes.

2. Second, based on the research and visits we undertook to the Southeast, Nigeria is not poor in resources, in talents and expertise, in research and innovations, and in entrepreneurial capacity. God has blessed every state and every geopolitical zone with resources (people, talents, experts, population, and land and mineral resources), which each state could leverage to build balanced, sustainable value chains that would strengthen mutually beneficial relationships between the people, educational and research institutions, businesses, and governments without foreign borrowing or assistance. The challenge lies in bilateral and multilateral organizations and foreign NGOs that brand themselves as donors but whose activities displace Nigerian talents, experts, educational and research institutions, and businesses by providing credit on terms intentionally designed to be non-performing. At the Centre for Growth and Development, we have called such credit Neo-Berlin loans, and the organizations that provide the credit facilities, Neo-Berlin Lenders. We did this because of our findings in one of our most recent research projects. We found that the bilateral, multilateral, and NGO lenders masquerading as “development partners” had partitioned the development finance opportunities at the federal and subnational levels, and across all subsectors of the public sector among themselves. They seemed to have adopted the strategy of the colonizing powers that met at the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference, which collaboratively partitioned Africa among themselves.

The displacement effects (of local talents, research and innovation experts, and institutions); the exchange rate risks of foreign currency denominated risks, and the effects of the stability of the local currency, as well as the crowding-out effects of debt service (interests, commitment fees, and management fees) and repayment of principal are major constraints to development, peace, and wellbeing of African citizens.

3. As a third takeaway from my national service as the CEA to the President, I am convinced that the coordination and integration of Nigerian public sectors around a clear vision, pivoted on efficient and effective utilization of Nigeria's resources and people, is critical to development, peace, and the wellbeing of women in Nigeria. The fragmentation and lack of coordination are exploited by unpatriotic Nigerians and foreign players to further fragment and disconnect the system. The Neo-Berlin Lenders have been successful in building a Nigerian support base for a parallel multi-donor public sector project designed to lead the economy into a long-term debt trap. They grant Sovereign Loans to National and Subnational governments to transfer as grants to selected beneficiaries. It is a model that is doomed to make the loans non-performing but benefit politicians who could use the grants to buy political capital. The grant recipients are not necessarily qualified; hence, they cannot multiply the benefits from the grants. The grants are also offered to beneficiaries at times that could not yield maximum or sustainable benefits. The structure of grants and the disbursement schedule also deliberately work against the performance of the loans, as the economic and financial analysis of the loans, which the lender does, have models that are known only to the lender. The public sector agents representing Nigeria do not evaluate the financial and economic analysis to establish the credibility of the estimated costs and benefits, and the underlying assumptions and model. Consequently, the costs, and benefits are deliberately overestimated and manipulated to show a positive Net Present Value (NPV) and acceptable Internal Rate of Return (IRR). The costs are frontloaded such that in one of the cases we analyzed, the NPV was negative for the first 17 years of the project yet produced a significantly positive NPV in the last three years! This meant that, were the benefits to be limited to the (6)-year life cycle of the project loan, the project would be financially and economically unviable. Indeed, it was not expected to be viable in its first 16 years! Yet state agents willingly signed on to the loans on behalf of Nigerians living and yet to be born. I challenge some of you to study Neo-Berlin lending and discover and report your findings on who benefits, why the Neo-Berlin lenders are so successful, and why the oversight system fails so miserably.

4. The fourth takeaway is that it is important for politics and for administrations not to dominate or impede the effectiveness of professionals in the public sector. In my time in OCEAP, we had highly qualified, talented, hardworking, and committed professionals that worked well with the administrative staff to weekly deliver the memos for Presidential briefings, the research to back up policy advice, and the intellect, commitment, and hard work needed to accomplish every task the President directed to the Office.

When we appeared before the Senate Committee on Appropriations, and after presenting the work plan for the fiscal year with the proposed budget, the Committee was concerned that the budget would not be sufficient for the scope of work in the plan. But we assured them that it was adequate. Indeed, far more could be accomplished when resources are used efficiently and waste is significantly cut. We politely declined wasteful local and international trips that would add no value to the office's deliveries and our capacities. We would also divert time and effort from focusing on the Office's mandate. It was obvious that public servants were using the allowances from these travels to supplement their real wages.

5. The fifth takeaway is that the hierarchy of power relations in Nigeria, and possibly in other African countries, needs to be corrected. At the time I was in government, the politicians dominated the citizens. They did what they wanted in the choice of strategy, policies, projects, and project loans, even when these choices were not what the citizens wanted. However, the powerful foreign players (governments, bilateral, multilaterals, NGOs, and businesspeople of all shades) dominated the political leaders in the executive and legislative branches of governments. They leveraged on their advantages (military and economic power and influence, coordination, strategic plans, easy access, covert information and persuasion, loans, technical assistance, etc) to get political leaders to make compromises and strategies, policies, projects, and project loans, all while taking actions that may hinder the development of the people. Nigeria has been a long way from Murtala Mohammed's "Africa has come of age" speech in 1976. It is worth remembering that Murtala Mohammed was assassinated on February 13, 1976, 34 days after he made his speech. The dominance of foreign governments, bilateral and multilateral organizations, and powerful NGOs in the Nigerian policy space puts the lives of the political leaders in grave danger. John Perkins' 2004 bestseller *The Confessions of an Economic Hitman*,²⁸ revealed how precarious the lives of political leaders committed to uplifting their nations are. It is not enough for political leaders to have good intentions. Navigating the treacherous national and global political economy landscape with its minefields is difficult, even to those with the best intentions. To put it simply, African development, peace, and the well-being of African women are not just about strategies, policies, or interventions. The global political economy is overtly and covertly hostile to the equitable and balanced development of all nations. It is wired and controlled to produce a few Rich and a multitude of Lazaruses. Even Adam Smith warned the poor that it was foolhardy to covet the things the rich had and to try to work hard towards becoming rich. African political leaders and people need divine favor to overcome, and this requires a right relationship and fellowship with God and with other Africans and other members of the human community.

6. Finally, I believe strongly that our educational institutions and the building of the human capacity for development must be transformed. It is important to note that the impact of education on the life of a person, on the lives of members of the family, and the society is lifelong. I have previously pointed out the dangers of Macaulayan education. Professor Joseph Ilori explained that the impulse of the dominant world order to compartmentalize human lives causes individuals to lose their spiritual center.

Furthermore, it contributed to the fragmentation, disorganization, and disconnection within modern individuals and society.

Therefore, I would not be surprised if some of us believed that faith and intellect were independent. However, for me, my faith is the foundation of my life; it is the lens through which I see life and everything in it. Therefore, I am for building true citizens who care more about the commonwealth than themselves and their narrow interests, and who are competent and skilled enough to protect the integrity of Nigeria and of other African countries against evil forces both from within and outside their borders. That will ultimately determine how long Nigeria, and other African countries, will remain exploitative opportunities for others.

Some Concluding Remarks

On my return to the university, I took time to reflect on the value of all the research papers, reports, and books that I had written and published on women, economic development, and conflict. I also reflected generally about the gulf between the field, academic works, and the public sector in Nigeria. It was clear to me that research and academic papers had a limited understanding of how the public sector functions, the overt and covert games and intrigues, the players (agents and principals), strategic interests, and the strategic pay-off matrix.

My experiences have convinced me that every student, teacher, and researcher must deeply reflect on the value of what they have learned and continue to learn; what they have taught and continue to teach; what they have researched and continue to research. There is learning that integrates and learning that fragments and disconnects. In integrated learning, “the subject, teacher, classroom, student, and real-life are interconnected and held together; learners are encouraged to have a unified understanding of reality, and to integrate faith with reason, knowledge with subject content, and contextual issues within a global classroom.”²⁹ In contrast, the Macaulayan system is disintegrated, and according to Oyekan,³⁰ “ill-adapted to African culture and does not serve African needs” because it cuts off the African student from “traditional values, customs, and culture” and that, instead of transmitting the African culture, it sets Africans on a “puzzled (and fruitless) search for a new one.” I share the view by Gnanakan³¹ that education “is not merely about what students learn, but about what they become and how they apply what they have learnt to their daily lives” and is undergirded by integration (wholeness); holism (wholeness and interdependences between its elements), and synergy (joint or cooperative learning). An educational system that falsifies history, geography, relationships between faith, science, and philosophy, and seeks to control the thoughts, choices, and actions of learners cannot enlighten, empower, or equip learners with knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

There is teaching of falsehood (which leads to folly and dependence) and the teaching of truth, which leads to knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. There is research that seeks truth and research that promotes falsehood.

Each student, each teacher, and each researcher has a personal responsibility for what they learn, teach, and research. How each reacts or responds has implications for African development, peace, and the well-being of women, for better or worse. Finally, the development, peace, and wellbeing of African women, men, and children demand that those privileged to navigate classrooms, fields, and/or the public and private sectors, be committed and willing to make the necessary sacrifices. It is far easier to compromise and become agents of those committed to exploiting African resources and keeping Africa well below its potentials. However, Nigeria and other African countries stand no chance of fulfilling their God-given potential if no citizens are willing, capable, and ready to stand in the gap between African countries and their detractors, so that African countries can truly use all their resources to bring about balanced and sustainable growth and development for their nations.

As you present, reflect, and share your learning, teaching, and research plans, experiences and outputs, I wish you well. I pray that sharing my experience will help you make some important decisions that will ensure your own navigation of the classroom, the field, and public service gives you inner peace, is profitable for your nation and for Africa, and that you all fulfill your true calling to contribute towards the making of an Africa that has truly come of age.

Thank you, and God Bless you.

Notes

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ABOUT THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER

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