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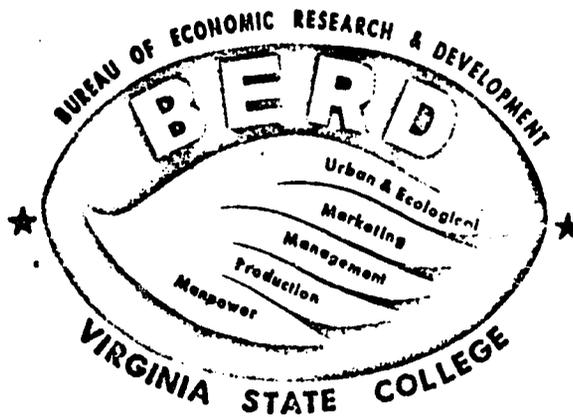
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CONFERENCE**

**A conference concerning U.S. Policies in Human Resource Development, Population
Policies and Programs, and Economics Planning and Employment Issues**

MICHAEL A. STATE UNIVERSITY
APPLIED ECONOMICS AND ECONOMIC PROGRAMS
DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED ECONOMICS
EAST LANSING, MI 48823



VIRGINIA STATE COLLEGE — EDUCATION BUILDING — PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA

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ECONOMIC PLANNING AND EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

by

Carl K. Eicher
Professor of Agricultural Economics
Michigan State University
and
Chairman, Overseas Liaison Committee
American Council on Education
Washington, D.C.

Will there be any role for American researchers in Africa in the 1980's? This is an important question which can be analyzed within the context of the performance of American scholars and U.S. government and private agencies supplying expertise on Africa over the 1950-73 period. For example, a quick review of a recent book, *Nigeria: Modernization and the Politics of Communalism*¹ disclosed that all of the 20 contributors were American and U.K. scholars. Why were no African political scientists in the list of contributors? One answer is that many American institutions supplying expertise on Africa over the past quarter of a century did not provide an opportunity for African scholars to compete for research funds from U.S. agencies.

Generally U.S. institutions were not noted for their capacity to create a community of scholars (both African and American) to undertake research in Africa. U.S. institutions facilitated the interests of U.S. scholars and as a result, a significant imbalance in scholarship on Africa emerged in many disciplines such as political science and history. As a result of this imbalance and a number of other complex factors, the doors of many African countries are being closed to American for foreign researchers.

If American scholars want to remain relevant to the problems of African countries, African universities and to donor agencies assisting Africa in the 1980's, there needs to be redirection in the style, attitude

¹Edited by Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1971.

and the approaches of American researchers in Africa. Unless this redirection is implemented I am convinced that there will be a token demand from Africa for American scholarship in the 1980's. The first step in this redirection calls for an examination of the social and economic development process in African countries with emphasis on the types of problems which are likely to be important in Africa in the 1970's and 1980's.

If we address ourselves to the problems of Africa in the early seventies and look ahead to the 1980's what do we find? The OECD has recently prepared a ranking of the 25 "least developed" of the developing countries as shown in Table 1. The "least developed" of the developing countries are ranked by the U.N. according to the following criteria:

1. Gross domestic product of less than \$100 per capita in 1968.
2. Manufacturing accounting for 10 or 12 percent or less of the total value of GDP.
3. Less than 20 percent of the population is literate.

Although there are many different variables you can use to rank countries depending on your particular meaning of development, the above three criteria which have been used by the U.N. to rank the least developed of the developing countries are a rough but useful composite index of developments. When you look at these 25 least developed countries you will notice that 16 of the 25 are in Africa. You will also notice a high percentage of these 16 countries are land locked. As we examine the 16 African countries which are among the 25 least developed of all developing countries and the remaining countries in Africa we find that there is one overriding feature -- they are mainly agrarian countries with 70-90 percent of their people in agriculture. In addition, to the "agrarian grip" on these countries, we note that the road to development in most African countries in the 1970's and 1980's will depend to a considerable degree on how their agricultural sectors can be better

organized and modernized. I am of the opinion that greatly increased economic research on agricultural problems can improve the decision making process in African countries. Although there is a long list of economic research topics I shall focus on one important problem area -- unemployment and underemployment.

The purpose of the balance of this paper is to illustrate how policy oriented research on rural employment problems in Africa is being carried out in the form of an African Rural Employment Study. (A description of the African Rural Employment Study is found in Appendix A.)

Our present three year research study of rural employment problems in Africa grew out of a summer research project which three of my graduate students and I carried out for AID in an attempt to answer the question of whether more productive employment could be generated in agriculture in African countries. Although our report used the catchy title, "Employment Generation in African Agriculture"¹ we found in our review of the literature on unemployment problems in Africa that data were not available in these countries to determine whether in fact more productive employment could be found in the agricultural sector. As a result we recommend research should be pursued on this topic. The next question was how should research be organized on these particular questions?

We took a decision in 1970 that the only way to approach research on these problems was to sit down and ask African scholars if they were interested in jointly preparing research proposals. We then obtained a small research contract from AID/Washington which allowed us to interact with a group of scholars in Africa in 1971 in developing a network of researchers and a formal research proposal which was submitted to AID/Washington in January of 1972. In June 1972 we signed a three year research contract with AID/Washington which launched our African Rural Employment Study. The main objective of the African

¹Carl K. Eicher, et. al. *Employment Generation in African Agriculture*. Michigan State University, Institute of International Agriculture, Research Report No. 9, July 1970.

Table 1. ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF LEAST-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Countries	Land-locked	Population (million) 1969	Three criteria used to rank least developed Countries		
			Gross domestic product per capita, S(1968)	Manufacturing share in total production % 1968	Literature adults as % of adults 1968
African:					
Botswana	•	0.6	106	8	20
Burundi	•	3.5	53	4	10
Chad	•	3.6	73	4	7
Dahomey		2.6	91	5	10
Ethiopia		24.8	64	9	5
Guinea		3.8	80	9	5
Lesotho	•	0.9	87	1	40
Malawi	•	4.4	69	8	15
Mali	•	4.9	92	8	2
Niger	•	3.9	89	6	1
Rwanda	•	3.5	43	n.a.	10
Somalia		2.7	60	n.a.	5
Sudan		15.3	115	7	12
Tanzania		12.1	71	6	17
Uganda	•	9.5	95	8	25
Upper Volta	•	5.3	51	6	7
Others:					
Afghanistan	•	16.5	91	11	8
Bhutan	•	0.8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Haiti		4.8	83	12	11
Laos	•	2.9	72	n.a.	15
Maldives		0.1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Nepal	•	10.8	82	11	9
Sikkim	•	0.2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Western Samoa		0.1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Yemen (Arab Repub.)		5.6	110	n.a.	10

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Development Cooperation: 1972 Review*. Paris: OECD, December 1972, p. 104

Rural Employment Study is to further comparative research on rural employment problems in tropical Africa. We are proceeding to carry out micro level research with a heavy emphasis on primary data collection at the village level on a whole range of issues which influence the demand for labor in agriculture and in rural non-farm occupations.

Our African Rural Employment Study has placed considerable emphasis on developing a conceptual framework for the study of rural employment problems before going to the field to collect micro data. The results of our work on a conceptual framework for the study of rural employment problems are being reported in our publication series entitled "African Rural Employment Papers."¹The first paper entitled "Rural Employment, Migration and Economic Development," attempts to integrate research on rural employment, migration and economic development. The second paper on "Migration in Africa: Past, Present and Future" reviews about 130 studies on migration in Africa. Although there has been conducted by geographers, sociologists, and it generally has not been very policy relevant. In addition, past research on migration has relied heavily on data collected in urban areas and on census data. There is a need to carry out intensive studies in rural areas on the decision making process which guides labor allocation in agricultural production, rural non-farm employment or rural-rural or rural-urban migration. Our research on migration will be policy oriented and will be carried out concurrently with studies of agricultural production and rural non-farm employment.

The third paper is by a Sierra Leonian agricultural economists, Dr. Dunstan Spencer, who recently visited Virginia State as part of the Overseas Liaison Committee's 1972/73 International Seminar Series. Dr. Spencer recently completed a three year micro study of rice production in Sierra Leone and he has recorded his experience in organizing and carrying out village studies in Sierra Leone in African Rural Employment

Paper No. 3. Also, Dr. David Norman has been carrying out village studies for the past seven years in Northern Nigeria. Norman's experience in organizing and carrying out village studies are reported in Papers No. 4 and 8.

Our African Rural Employment Study will be carried out for a period of three years in Sierra Leone and Nigeria and possibly in Ethiopia over a five year period. We also have other scholars who are working with other sources of funding in Ghana, Zaire, Tanzania, and in Kenya. Although there are about 24 or 25 researchers who are working or will be carrying out a wide range of research problems on employment and income distributions.

We have a number of problems, however, with the network approach. One problem is how to develop a research partnership among unequals in terms of the availability of funding. Our network assumes that Americans and Africans are equally qualified as scholars, share an equal interest in the stated problems and have the same capacity to deliver research results on schedule. However, since Michigan State University has signed a contract with AID/Washington to deliver the results of the African Rural Employment Study, we will use the concept of sub-contracting research to African scholars as one means of operationalizing the partnership among equals. For example, we have just signed a sub-contract with the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Ibadan. Next, we are sub-contracting with a Sierra Leonian - Dr. Dunstan Spencer - for field work in Sierra Leone. We hope the sub-contracting can overcome some of the problems inherent in our central research contract. However, I believe we should push in the direction of matching funds - bringing in outside research funds only when they are matched with local funds. Also, there is a need for donors to make block research grants directly to African research institutes. AID's Bureau for Africa program of channelling grants (similar to 211d grants to U.S. universities) to

¹See Appendix B for a list of the African Rural Employment Papers. These papers are being distributed to every department of economics, department of agricultural economics, and to every social science research institute in African universities.

African social science research institutes is a welcome step in this direction.

Another problem facing our African Rural Employment Study is that of policy relevance. Since our network is composed of academic researchers we can easily be tied to the research problems of current interest to our academic disciplines rather than to the problems of current interest to our academic disciplines rather than to the problems facing policy makers in African countries. Although there are obvious advantages of undertaking joint research with government agencies we have taken a position of working with scholars in African universities for two reasons: first, universities are involved in training and research and the African Rural Employment Study seems to offer a potential to strengthen local training by offering jobs to university students as members of research teams, and providing data for development of local courses, etc. Second since employment and income distribution problems are politically sensitive it is obvious that foreign researchers will have little opportunity to become directly engaged in policy analysis on these issues. Our network is an "academic network." Steps are being taken by African researchers in Sierra Leone and Nigeria to relate their research more directly to the needs of government and to obtain the feedback of government officers.

Another problem is that of developing a common analytical framework for the study when it involves more than one country and it takes into consideration the research interest of African scholars rather than imposing a monolithic framework and set of research priorities. I have already mentioned that we have spent the past year in developing an analytical framework which has been reported in the first eight analytical papers. In addition we bring our researchers together once a year for one week to discuss research methodology. Our first meeting was held in Nigeria in December, 1971, our second in Bellagio, Italy in October, 1972 and our third will be held in Sierra Leone in the fall of 1973.

The above discussion has been in the nature of a progress report on how we are trying to develop an "academic network" of U.S. and African researchers to undertake policy relevant research in Africa. Although

there is still room for the "lone scholar" to undertake research in Africa, we are convinced that there is a great deal of duplication of effort when U.S. professors and graduate students go to Africa and function as independent researchers. We think there is a need for "clusters of scholars" to work on key problems for periods of 5-10 years. We think that our network approach to research in one way which American researchers can contribute both to African governments, to African universities and hopefully to donors as they try to improve their policies in coming to grips with problems of employment and income distribution.

Let me conclude by returning to my opening question, will there be a demand for American Scholarship on African problems in the 1980's? I am of the opinion that steps should be taken now - in the 1970's - to redirect how American researchers relate to African scholars and governments. I think that we should encourage a "community of scholars" (both American and African) working on African problems rather than programs which earmark funds for American professors and students. Second, I think that we should encourage joint faculty appointments whereby Africans could simultaneously hold appointments with an African and American university. For example, there is no reason why Virginia State College could not use its 211d funding to offer a three year appointment to an African faculty member who could spend nine months every year as a member of his university in Africa and three months at Virginia State. Third, attention should be given to funding African social science research institutions and fourth, the network approach to social science research should be continued with emphasis on linking African scholars within Africa and in other regions.