

POVERTY AMIDST PLENTY: SOUTHERN AFRICA'S REGIONAL SHAME

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ABSTRACT

Poverty has been a characteristic of most of the southern African region. Despite the fact that the region is endowed with unprecedented amounts and varieties of natural resources (mineral, flora, and fauna), poverty levels has continued to threaten the livelihoods of most of the region's citizens as well as its sovereignty. The appalling phenomena in Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe have attracted international attention, given that each of these countries boast of one resource or another which, if fully and properly utilized, would earn the region the bread basket status for the continent. Individually and among others, the region has wildlife, river systems conducive to the generation of electricity, oil, minerals, and arable land and pastures for animal husbandry. Ironically, poverty is a stark reality in the region with the generality of the population living below a US\$ per day. HIV/AIDS rates of infection are among the highest in the world. Many live below the Food Datum Line (FDL) and unemployment in all these countries is soaring. This paper analyzes this scenario. Among others, it raises the following questions:

1. To what extent have neo-colonial structures inhibited the confronting of poverty head on?
2. To what extent are the region's development partners a disappointment in its struggle for sustainable socio-economic development?
3. How far has the region persistently and consistently applied itself to policies it has set for itself for the eradication of poverty?

The paper essentially argues that chronic food shortages, recurrent famine, deteriorating terms of trade, and rising unemployment are the results of the regional political leadership's failure to confront, head on, the colonial structures and neo-colonialism that inhibit development. The region's development partners are also letting it down. Regional and continental blueprints that have been drawn to deal with growing poverty have not been applied persistently. Poverty has, therefore, remained a regional shame for southern Africa.

Keywords: Poverty; Natural Resources; Minerals; Endowed; Flora and Fauna

INTRODUCTION

The diamonds and oil of Angola, the goldfields and platinum of South Africa, the gold, platinum, and diamonds of Zimbabwe, the copper of Zambia, the fisheries of Malawi and Namibia, the diamonds of Botswana, and the rich alluvial soils of Mozambique are all indicative of a region that is well endowed with natural resources. Despite the availability of such lucrative and precious mineral and natural resources in the cited countries, there are prevalent high levels of poverty. In almost all these countries, wildlife flourishes and, yet, against this background, poverty reigns supreme. The abundance of flora and fauna has presented an opportunity for a vibrant tourism industry. Yet, regular poaching syndicates have tended to dissipate these natural resources.

What cascades down to the citizens of these countries in terms of benefits from the rich mineral and the tourism industry is pathetic, to say the least. Despite these rich endowments, the ordinary citizens of the region are riling under extreme poverty, with the majority living on less than \$1 a day. Skewed agrarian policies have led to the under-utilization of the arable and prime land, whose propensity to feed the peoples of these countries is obvious. Corruption in the allocation of these resources by the local ruling elites, lack of appropriate skills to work the land, and greed has all led to near-starvation with the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) (2009), indicating that more than half of the region's population faces starvation. With reference to Malawi and Mozambique, FEWS NET (2009) has the following to say:

“Isolated pockets of moderate food insecurity identified in areas facing production shortfalls will persist through December, particularly in areas that have experienced successive years of production and livelihoods shocks, as is the case in southern Malawi and the arid and semi-arid areas of Mozambique. The very poor and poor households in these areas have exhausted their coping strategies and will continue to encounter difficulties in accessing food and other basic necessities unless there is [a] timely and adequate external intervention”

The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) estimated, in 1996, that 43 percent of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)'s population was (and is) chronically undernourished (Saasa,2001) . Over the past three decade's food production levels, in many of the countries of the region, have either declined or stagnated. Yet the regional population growth rate has been around 3 percent per annum (Mkandawire and Matlosa,1993). Life expectancy in the region is comparatively lower than in other regions of the continent, with some countries, like Zimbabwe, having a rate of about 38 years.

With research having shown that rates of the HIV/AIDS infection is prevalent in poor communities, many with little or no access to information and health education and facilities, it comes as no surprise that they are among the highest in the world. The cases of high HIV/AIDS prevalence in South Africa, Botswana, and Zimbabwe, whose GDPs are impressive, are indications of the fact that the country's economic status does not show its ability to fight the scourge. Balance of payments is negative for many of the Southern African countries in which case further consolidates the affinity between the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and poverty. International labor migration out of the region is very high because of the number of factors, such as push factors, and expectations of higher standards of living in the Diaspora. Overall, the picture for the whole region is quite gloomy.

There are various conceptions of poverty and human development. To some, the human development concept emphasizes the expansion of choices, while human poverty is, 'a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon. It focuses on how the poor are deprived in terms of income, physical, material, and psychic capabilities and other discriminatory factors necessary for social cohesion.' Human Development Report 1997. For purposes of this discussion, the conceptions of poverty adopted here are one that was aptly phrased by Prof. Matsebula. He defined poverty as, 'the deprivation or denial of the most basic choices, such as living a long, healthy and creative life, accessing a decent standard of living, and enjoying freedom, dignity, and self-esteem.'(Matsebula, 1999:151). The other is the one that emphasizes consumption levels, whether domestically determined or fixed internationally. Using the deprivational and consumptive approaches, one notes that Southern Africa has so many poor people. According to P. Molutsi close to 200 million people in the region "not only live in conditions of abject poverty, disease, and ignorance, but also remain locked up in dormitory-like villages with little hope for a better life"(Molutsi,1997:15). The question of poverty is very important because if not addressed there is a risk that one day the situation might explode in the region. The questions that arise include how do explain anomaly of high levels of abundant resources and high expectations for the post-colonial dispensation and what the region can do to get out of this malaise. An explanation of the status quo and proffering some tentative ways out of the current poverty in the region are obtained.

EXPLAINING THE STATUS QUO: THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF THE CURRENT POVERTY

Unlike countries like Ethiopia and Liberia that were saved from the full vagaries of colonialism, the southern African countries were all fully exposed. In fact, the region has countries that experienced some of the longest colonization. South Africa has one of longest and most brutal colonial systems in Africa, dating back to the 17th century and only ending as late as 1994. Mozambique and Angola also experienced very brutal colonialism at the hands of the Portugal, which is an undeveloped imperial power. As would be expected, during the colonial period there was systematic exploitation of the region's natural and human resources for the benefit of the colonialists, who were far less in numbers than the indigenous people. In all the countries in question, land ownership was skewed in favor of the minority whites, who took much of the prime land. The roots of the current poverty in the region are partly located in the colonial land policies that entrenched land alienation. Expropriation of land was a common feature that characterized colonialism not just in southern Africa, but in most of Africa as a whole. The Native Lands Act of South Africa (SA) and The Land Apportionment Act of Southern Rhodesia (SR) are good examples of racially driven land alienation legislations. By undermining the peasant's traditional source of life and imposing tax obligations on him, the whites not only dealt with economic competition from the blacks but made them laborers on white enterprises too.

Apart from the land, the white minority also enjoyed preferential treatment in terms of capital allocation. They had easy credits from the colonial authorities for them to start business. Colonial states also promulgated racist labor laws. The 1899 Antonio Anes Native Labor Code in Portuguese colonies and the Master and Servants Acts in South Africa and Rhodesia are cases in point. Primitive capital accumulation was almost a feature of much of the colonial period. Africans were generally denied the best education and training and were therefore conspicuous by their absence in the corridors of administration. Both African industrialists and business people were considered as worth of recognition in the economic development of the

continent. It was this racist dispensation, which the nationalist leaders, with the support of peasants, took up arms to dislodge. At varying points in time, and with the support of each other, the region achieved political independence. The independence achieved in the 20th century was marked by a 'crisis of expectation' from the general populace. They expected an improvement in their living standards and respect for their human rights. They expected the dawn of democracy. Their euphoric expectations are justified. They had suffered so much at the hands of racist settler regimes and now expected their African-led governments to deliver on the promises made during the liberation struggles. Unfortunately, independence has not lived up to the expectations of the general people. It is to this failure of the post-colonial state to deliver the goods that has resulted in economic stagnation, political turmoil and social decay that has bedeviled the continent.

COLONIAL STRUCTURES STILL INTACT

While the Southern African states have made significant achievements in socio-economic spheres, one can boldly assert that colonial structures have not yet been dismantled in many a Southern African states. Colonial structures are still in place not just in Southern Africa, but in other parts of Africa as well. The only notable change from the colonial to the post-colonial period has been a change in complexion of the state managers (Ake, 1996). This is true, to a large extent, for countries such as South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, and Malawi. The land distribution pattern in the said countries is a case in point. In the early years of majority rule, the status quo was attributed to the constitutions which entrenched the existing property rights. The national constitution of Namibia, for example, had a clause, 'willing seller-willing buyer,' that made the transfer of land to the indigenous people to occur in piecemeal fashion (Kaaopama,2007). Land redistribution was also bedeviled by corruption. Economic elites, with strong links with bureaucrats in government, got the bulk of the acquired land.

In Malawi, land distribution problems also stem directly from the post-independence government's policy. Under colonialism, some settler farmers had eked out large commercial farms for themselves but the post-colonial state's land policy made land distribution even more inequitable. According to Carol B. Thompson, 1991), by rewarding 'master farmers' with more inputs and price incentives, land moved away from the poorer farmers and came to be consolidated under the former¹. The World Bank (1998) supported this move arguing that privatization gave farmers greater security and could therefore invest on the farms. The result of this policy was that about 55 percent of the farmers were left with less than 1 hectare of land (2001). Large commercial farms that are run by agribusiness have also increased in size. One outcome of this scenario has been marked grain production, sometimes recording surpluses, on the large landholdings while peasants have wallowed in impoverishment and unemployment. Distribution challenges have resulted in famine.

Land distribution in Swaziland can also be described as inequitable. In part, this can be ascribed to the tripartite land tenure system that was imposed by British colonial administration in 1907. By this system, land was divided into three parts, namely: the individual freehold sector, into which settlers were encouraged to move; crown land, held by the colonial authority for its own disposal; and, a communal sector, that was for exclusive occupation by the Swazi people (Thompson,1991). The latter sector accounted for about 33 percent of all the land that was then sub-divided into reserves.

¹ Thompson,C.D(1991)Under Fire: Regional Co-operation For Food Security in Southern Africa, Zed Books, London, 1991.p61.

After World War II (WW2), foreign capital, mostly South African and British agricultural interests, moved in and established sugar, citrus, and timber estates. In the post-colonial period, individual title deed farmers with connections to the royal family moved into large-scale production, emphasizing sugar. At the same time, the national staple, maize, has been on the decline because of insufficient land for the small family plots. Overgrazing has also tended to characterize the communal sector. Despite this, agriculture contributes approximately 26 percent to GDP and employs 75 percent of the country's total indigenous workforce (Dhamini,1993).

In recent years the post-colonial states in the region have moved cautiously in land redistribution for fear of the Zimbabwean peril. The governments are very cautious. They want to avoid the debilitating effects of the Zimbabwean type of land reform. This was a radical type of land reform that displaced the experienced and capitalized minority white farmers and replaced them with the blacks from 2000 onwards. While its noble intentions cannot be doubted, it is the manner in which it was carried out, which leaves a lot to be desired. Fearing imminent election defeat from a formidable opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the government unleashed the war veterans, who violently took over farms, inheriting white property and killing others in the process². Since the displacement of the experienced formers in 2000, the country has always had food deficits and its international relations image has reached a nadir. Sanctions have been imposed by the west particularly Britain, the United States, and other European countries over the alleged disregard for human rights. It is these adverse skewed land distribution structures which other regional leaders have tried to avoid. For many in the sub-region, with respect to land ownership, it is not yet time to enjoy the fruits of political independence which s many people sacrificed their lives.

The xenophobic attacks in South Africa attest to the fact that colonial economic structures are still very much intact there. In these attacks, which began in Alexandra township, north-east of Johannesburg before spreading to other slums across the country, around 60 people were murdered. Hundreds of other people were injured while thousands were displaced from their homes (22 July 2008 p5). The attacks should be condemned in the strongest terms because when South Africa was experiencing robust economic development during the colonial period, on the backdrop of cheap migrant labor from the sub-region. Further SA achieved political independence because it got support from its neighbors and for that they had to pay a huge price. Apartheid authorities attacked these countries. During the deadly attacks, the marauding mobs were accusing foreigners of 'taking our jobs and women'. The attacks flew in the face of regional integration. It seems cogent to argue that the attacks are reflective of a deep-seated socio-economic problem. There have not been remarkable empowerments of the indigenous South Africans into the mainstream economic activities. Local and international white capital is still exploiting the country's human and material resources. It is still an enclave economy. This gives credence to the fact that colonial structures are still quite strong with just a few cosmetic changes here and there.

However, this is not to suggest that the post-independence states have done completely nothing to empower indigenous people. In almost all the countries, marketing facilities have been placed at the doorsteps of the smallholder farmers. Producer

² In that election, approximately 30 people died, including white farmers who were accused of subverting the reform exercise and also of supporting the opposition party. The exact number of casualties is difficult to ascertain considering that some were secretive operations.

prices have been put in place in Lesotho, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, although in the latter. no sooner are the prices announced that they are eroded by inflation. Extension services are also accessible to most farmers in the sub-region. In Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Angola, Zambia, Malawi, and Swaziland the institutional framework for offering training to farmers has been put in place so that farming can be carried out on an informed basis. These institutions range from local to national institutions, the latter including universities, in most cases. The University of Zimbabwe, Zambia National University, University of Botswana, the University of Swaziland and other various South African universities offer training to local people so that when they engage in farming, they do so with technical know-how. Notwithstanding these efforts to increase agricultural production through training, the curricula they use can be questioned. Primarily, they have remained Western in orientation with thrusts towards hybridization. Very few have incorporated indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in their curricula. In the area of human development, a number of education institutions and vocational training centers have been put in place by most governments for their people. Infrastructure development has also been done, although there is much which still needs to be done.

POVERTY ALLEVIATING PARTNERS

On attainment of independence, though at various points in time, most leaders in the sub-region went all out to try and satisfy the huge expectations of the indigenous people. Post-independence governments, therefore, invested heavily in the social services sector as a way of re-distributing the national cake. The huge capital outlay, required for tasks of this magnitude against a backdrop of weak export performance resulted in serious balance-of-payments problems. To solve these problems, the post-colonial states turned to partners whose development prescriptions were often more dangerous than the initial diseases.

The Southern African region, like much of Sub-Saharan Africa is more vertically integrated than horizontally. This derives from the fact that, to solve its development challenges, the region looked up to the north for expertise and capital. Unfortunately, the development objectives and strategies of the north and south have not always converged. In fact the north's agenda can be summed up as a desire to continuously swindle the south out of its resources.

The west and western institutions, such as the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) are very much neo-liberal in economic policy orientation. In their dealings with Africa, they almost view economic growth as being synonymous with development. This point derives from the development strategies that they have prescribed for Africa. The standard Bretton Woods institutions' package for development in Third World Countries (3WCs) include trade liberalization, currency devaluation, elimination of price controls, reduction of budget deficits, removal of government subsidies on goods and services, privatization of state-owned public enterprises, and the opening up of the economy to foreign investment. According to T. Mkandawire (2005), trade liberalization would not only increase the 'traditional exports' of individual countries, but would also enable them to diversify their exports to include manufactured goods assigned to them by the law of comparative advantage, as spelt out and enforced by 'market forces' (Mkandawire in Wisner et al, 2005). In other words, the rolling back of the state would, in the end, deliver development and end poverty in the liberalizing countries. However, reality on the ground points to a different picture.

The supposed benefits from adjustment turned out to entrench poverty in the adjusting countries. In Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Swaziland, for example, the neo-liberal economic reforms resulted in retrenchments, predominance of the informal sector in of economic activities, expensive goods and services, like education and health, and sustained waves of international labor migration. In Zambia and Zimbabwe, for example, there was an almost total collapse of the health services sector. With their incorporation of the adjusting countries into the international capitalist system, the 3WCs are exploited of their resources. The core has continued to develop, while the periphery has been further marginalized. In the periphery, the rich-poor gap widened and the liberal inspired ideological framework, as prescribed by the South's partners, has failed to have a human face.

To reduce the burden of underdevelopment in the countries of the South, the highly industrialized countries have suggested other packages, such as debt scheduling and debt cancellation. This stems from the West's realization that it developed on the back market and human resources from the South and so it is payback time. They have a moral obligation to assist the struggling south to deal with poverty. Slavery, colonialism, and now the partnership agenda of globalization have ensured the expropriation of Africa's resources. However, for the south to qualify for debt forgiveness, they have to meet certain conditionalities, as usual. In southern Africa, it is the highly indebted poor countries, such as Malawi, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zambia, that have met the strict criteria to qualify for debt cancellation. These countries have enjoyed the following quantities of debt-relief: Mozambique - US \$600 million, Malawi - US \$1 billion, Tanzania - US \$3 billion and Zambia – US \$3.8 billion. The other countries, notwithstanding the challenge of development, have to repay their debts (World Bank,1998).

BLUEPRINTS TO ADDRESS POVERTY

Africa, in general, and southern Africa, in particular, has never been short of economic blueprints to steer the region out of poverty. Some of the blueprints that have been drawn are:

- Nkrumah's Pan- Africanism
- Lagos Plan of Action
- Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs)
- New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)
- SADC Treaty of 1992.

Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism can be viewed as both an ideology and an economic blueprint for Africa. His Pan-African framework was underpinned by the following: political union was to be the essential prerequisite for African economic integration, a Union Government of African states with the task of formulating comprehensive policies, African common market, common currency, and a central bank, and an integrated industrial structure, among other things (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006). Despite the fact that this was a very sound and comprehensive blueprint, no sooner had it been implemented to its ultimate conclusion than Africa began to be fragmented into several linguistics units, which ensured its incorporation and exploitation by the former colonial masters.

The Lagos Plan of Action, based on the Monrovia Declaration, rested on three broad socio-economic objectives, which are the deliberate promotion of an increasing measure of self-reliance, the acceleration of an internally located process of growth and diversification, and the progressive eradication of unemployment and mass poverty and a fair and just distribution of income and the benefits of economic development among the population (Adedeji, 1989). Evidently, the LPA sought to reduce over-dependence on the west, but without strong regional or continental integration it could not succeed.

Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) have been referred to briefly elsewhere in this paper; suffice to say that African leaders of such countries as Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe adopted SAPs with a mistaken notion that the programmes would deliver the goods to the generality of the populace. Despite expert advice to the contrary, the leaders of these countries implemented the programmes only to abandon the SAPs upon realizing that the programmes did not bring about the predicted economic benefits. In fact, poverty/underdevelopment worsened and these countries were left with huge external debts.

In the new millennium, the African leaders have chosen the path of partnership with the north in order to fight poverty. Since October 2001, the blueprint being pursued is NEPAD. Among others, it intends to reduce poverty among Africans and create political, material, technological, and human environments that enhance the development of the continent. NEPAD is said to be people-centered and based on market-oriented economies (Zounmenou, 2006). Notwithstanding the rhetoric to be people-centered and homegrown, NEPAD has been criticized for being more accountable to the north than the south. It appears more like the north's pledge for aid to the south and, as such, its chances of success are next to nil. We know quite well that in the so-called partnership, Africans are junior partners in the global political economy. In light of the above, the million-dollar question to ask is: What is the way forward in order to reduce poverty and bring development to the region?

THE WAY FORWARD

Having identified some of the major causes of poverty in the region, we attempt to give suggestions on how it can be alleviated. Proffering the way forward for Africa's economic quagmire is a big challenge.

It is rather more vexing than explaining the current poverty status. However, no matter how challenging it might be, academics and development practitioners should not shirk their responsibility of suggesting ways and means by which the region can deal with the scourge. Attempting to predict the way forward for Africa's economic underdevelopment would be almost impossible, especially given the matrix of political and social factors that have tended to inhibit the continent's development

A cocktail of measures can be suggested to give meaning to the political independence that the region has. These suggestions should be understood within the conceptualization of poverty alleviation adopted here. The conception of poverty reduction used is:

Putting food in the mouth of the hungry, cloth on the body of the naked,
shelter over the head of the homeless, clean water into the mouth of the
thirsty, blanket over the body of the cold and dignity to those who are

denigrated and alienated (Ndhlovu-Gatsheni, 2006).

In other words, I am trying to move away from the conception of poverty alleviation/development as being synonymous with economic growth. The measures which can be taken include, but are not limited to, forging tighter horizontal linkages as opposed to vertical integration, confronting head-on issues of inequitable land distribution and ensuring productivity on the farms, democratizing the region, and designing mechanisms of benefiting from international labor migration.

Countries in the region should be wary of vertical integration because it results in expropriation of the continent's resources by the north. Vertical integration can come via development aid and trade agreements with the north. These must be scrutinized and minimized if and when they have serious implications on poverty reduction. Rather, what must be encouraged is deeper co-operation and strategic partnerships among the regional countries culminating in integration. Movement of people and goods between states should be facilitated by synchronizing tariff and customs regimes in the region. All forms of barriers to exchange and movement of people must be removed. This would ensure movement of goods and services from areas of higher to lower concentrations.

There appears to be a strong correlation between poverty and lack of democracy in the sub-region. To some, the linkage between democracy and development is rather spurious. I, however, doubt this. The call for democracy is neither frivolous nor western. Democracy enhances the people's demand for their economic needs and, in a democracy, they get the requisite political attention. The exercise of their rights and agitation ensures equitable distribution of national resources. This argument has found resonance in the writings of the west African scholar, E. Gyimah-Boadi, who said that:

The practice of democracy gives citizens an opportunity to learn from each other and for the society to form its priorities and preference--- But democracy is certainly useful for sustained equitable distribution (Gyimah-Boadi, 2001).

The cases of Angola, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe clearly show how undemocratic regimes bring poverty at the doorsteps of the people. We are informed through the Swazi press that the King's word is law and he and his close associates are quite rich and yet the rich-poor gap is obscene. In Angola and Zimbabwe, over 65 percent of the population has been impoverished by undemocratic regimes. While the Cold War could be responsible for the in Angola, war in Angola could be partly be attributed to the Cold War, one cannot dismiss the influence of the demand for the equitable distribution of natural resources of the country as another cause of the devastating war that ravaged the country for over 20 years. In Zimbabwe, the authoritarian regime has not only hung on to power, but has also paid a deaf ear to calls for equitable distribution of resources. The chaotic land redistribution exercise carried out the Zimbabwe was a desperate attempt by the regime to cling to power by trying to placate the increasingly restive population that had demanded the equitable redistribution of resources for close to three decades on the backdrop of skewed economic, social and political policies that brought the country to the brink of economic collapse and a breakdown of the rule of law. Politics of patronage and corruption in the high corridors of political power are the order of the day. Elsewhere, some dictators have been benevolent, but, unfortunately, southern Africa has not been home to development-oriented dictators.

On the issue of strengthening democratic institutions in the region, SADC as a regional body has put in place a framework to try and buttress its image that has been characterized by the emergence of despotic regimes. One such attempt has been the enactment of the SADC Principles and Guidelines on the Conduct of Democratic Elections that sends out Observer Missions and election monitors on pre-election, election and post-election errands to assess the authenticity of electoral processes in the region. The mission's mandate is to determine whether the conduct of elections allowed the free expression of the people's will. This is quite welcome and a commendable step in democratization, but the real challenge is what happens if and when the OM dismisses the election as being not free and fair? Must the OM's report gather dust somewhere in the corners of the high offices? A mechanism must be devised to give some legal force to the considered recommendations of the OM. However, many dictators have taken advantage of some international statutes, like the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states to prevent election monitors from coming to monitor elections in different countries run by despots. This is because dictators often hide their excesses behind the principle of non-interference in their sovereignty. On the economic front, the region has also established economic politics that attempt to overcome trade barriers within the region such as a waiver of tariffs.

In countries such as Namibia and South Africa, there is need for land re-distribution. This stems from the fact that the peasant sector riles under over crowdedness due to unlimited amounts of land at its disposal. Juxtaposed with the peasant sector is the commercial sector with large estates. Moral justice is at stake and so some considerable land must be taken from commercial sector and ceded to the communal sector. However, a word of caution is necessary here. The kind of land reform required should not resemble the forceful confiscation as was experienced in Zimbabwean where a chaotic land redistribution exercise characterized by total disregard for property rights was experienced. Land redistribution and resource distribution should be legitimized, orderly, and ensure that productivity is not compromised. Production and productivity should be increased through availing training and giving easy credits to the resettled farmers.

Today, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the poorest countries on the continent with people in the country prone to pandemics. Its people are languishing in poverty and the civil strife that has been raging for close to four decades has left millions of casualties in its wake. Yet on the ground, the country is one of the richest in the world, in terms of natural resources. One of its small claims to fame is the production of rich mineral wealth, including uranium, which is a precious mineral and is sought after, especially by industrialized countries. It is worth noting that the bomb responsible for the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which brought an end to World War II, had its origins from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (Edwards, 1996). King Leopold, II is said to have thought himself a lucky man to have landed DRC (which was known as Zaire, then) as his personal property, which only goes to show how high esteemed the country was regarded due to its rich resource endowments. Kabila's short stint showed how the country can sustain its population and proceed to establish trade relations with other countries.

As a region, southern Africa has invested heavily in human resource development, but it is a fact that a significant proportion of its skilled manpower is outside the region. The most common destinations of these labor migrants are the United Kingdom

(UK), America, Canada, Australia, and other European countries. They are attracted by prospects for better paying jobs and better standards of living. Some go for higher education, but never return to their home countries. What makes this loss of personnel quite debilitating is the fact that the migrants are professionals and technocrats who should have been at the disposal of the region as it grapples with the scourge of poverty. Mechanisms, therefore, should be found on how remittances can be tapped from their host countries to the source countries. International labor agreements guaranteeing the remittance of a portion of migrants' earnings should be concluded between the host and source governments.

CONCLUSION

The paper has discussed the endemic poverty in the SADC region. It has shown that standards of living are very low, employment creation is limited, HIV/AIDS infection rates are high, and production of staple food is circumscribed. All this is happening against a backdrop of a fairly rapid natural increase of population. The irony for the region is that it is well-endowed with diverse natural and human resources. Neo-colonialism, unsupportive development partners, and a failure to fully implement poverty alleviating blueprints agreed upon are some of the major reasons identified as causes of poverty. Blame has also been shifted to political leaders, whose skewed policies have had daring consequences on the general populace. The paper concludes by suggesting measures that can be taken to deal with poverty in the region. Scholarly attention should be turned to further analyze poverty reduction strategies. This is a challenge that every citizen of the continent would agree with. While the region has the capacity and propensity to develop and sustain its population, the non-committal nature of most of its political leadership towards sustainable development has hindered prospects of rejuvenating the economies of the region. Despite impressive GDPs in some countries, the economic benefits do not trickle down to the generality of the populace. The result has been high poverty levels, a rise in criminal activities, and fraudulent electoral processes as political leaders strive to cling to power, mostly for economic benefits. Despite the fact that SADC was formed on the premise that it would promote political cohesion, good governance practices, peer review monitoring, trade, peace, and stability within the region, without equitable distribution of resources, there cannot be any form of peace among the poverty stricken in the region. What has been lacking has been the peer review monitoring mechanisms where SADC member states have taken a backseat while their neighbor's camp is on fire. The case of Zimbabwe has shown that SADC member states have failed each other, as Zimbabwe has degenerated into anarchy and an almost failed state (especially from 2007-2008). Militarization of public institutions and institutionalization of violence, at the expense of economic development, have not helped the desperate situation in most countries in the region, which has exacerbated poverty within the country (Mapuva, 2010). Concentration of political survival, at the expense of the grassroots population groups, has resulted in the gullible masses being used for political gain. Neo-colonial structures, such as the legitimization of corrupt practices, and the enactment of restrictive legislation to curtail free movement of citizens has also inhibited employment creation and subsequently poverty alleviation. With high unemployment levels, brain drain has taken precedence where most professionals seek employment opportunities outside the borders of their respective countries, where they are engaged in menial jobs and get underpaid. Given that SADC countries could pool their resources together, they can be able to bust any sanctions on any one of them. Together, the countries could collectively engage in poverty alleviation programs and practices on the face of the increasingly aggressive globalized economy. Also, given the high HIV/AIDS prevalence in the region, the countries could collectively seek ways of combating the scourge because their collective economies can sustain a vibrant health-related and

research unit to find a vaccine for the pandemic.

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