Trócaire Development Review, Dublin, 1989, pp. 41—59, ISSN 0790-9403

Structural Adjustment in Africa

Seamus Cleary

At least some structural adjustment programmes have had negative effects on the quality of life of African people. Many of the causes of Africa's deepening economic crisis stem from events outside its control. Nevertheless, adjustment to altered economic circumstances and market conditions is unavoidable. The scope for African governments to embark on adjustment programmes outside the orthodox framework is severely limited. But the appropriateness of this model in African conditions is questionable particularly in view of the human impact of the programmes. These include rising food prices, unemployment and deterioration in health and education services threatening the political stability of African countries. Adjustment programmes need to be fundamentally re-designed if they are to contribute to sustainable development in Africa.

Currently, some thirty Sub-Saharan African countries are implementing structural adjustment programmes. The essence of these programmes is the reduction/removal of direct state intervention in the productive and distributive sectors of the economy and the restriction of the State's role to the creation, mainly through the manipulation of fiscal and monetary instruments, of an institutional and policy framework conducive to the mobilisation of private enterprise and initiative.[1]

Most of these structural adjustment programmes have been negotiated with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and Sub-Saharan African countries are being actively encouraged to enter into such programmes by both bilateral and multilateral donors.

Yet, at least some of the programmes which have been implemented by Sub-Saharan African governments have had serious negative effects on the quality of life enjoyed by their people, and particularly the most vulnerable groups within their societies. These include rising unemployment, increased food prices, higher costs for education and health care, and a rapid decline in the availability of services in rural areas. Both the IMF and the major multilateral donor organisations, including the World Bank, have acknowledged that there have been severe costs associated with the programmes.

This article contends that as currently designed these programmes are inadequate to achieve their stated aims — a return to financial health and economic growth.

The need for reform

That there is a need for reform of many African economies is not in doubt. African governments publically recognised this need over four years ago[2] and have made considerable efforts in this direction. The African plan for continental recovery and development underpinned the UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD), adopted at the 13th Special Session of the UN General Assembly, 27 May-1 June 1986.[3] But, despite the consensual adoption of UNPAAERD at the conclusion of the special session, and the efforts of African governments to live up to their undertakings since then, the continent remains in deep economic crisis, which is predicted to worsen.

Many of the causes of the deepening economic crisis facing African countries stem from events outside their control. Reporting on UNPAAERD's progress to 1 October 1987, the Secretary-General noted that he "has unceasingly appealed to Africa's development partners to honour their commitments under the Programme of Action" and concluded that while some of the identified trends in the programme's implementation "are positive, . . . overall there are no grounds for complacency; on the contrary, there are grounds for serious concern".[4] These latter were spelt out by the report and recommendations of the Secretary-General's Advisory Group on Financial Flows for Africa. It noted that 18 months after the adoption of UNPAAERD, ***inter alia,***

- the IMF was a net recipient of financial flows from Sub-Saharan Africa from 1985-87 inclusive (respectively $426 million, $895 million, and $894 million); and
- the external financial situation of Sub-Saharan Africa, excluding Nigeria, had deteriorated sharply over the period 1979-81 to 1985-87, during which the region had suffered a net loss of $6.5 billion despite an increase in official grants totalling $1.1 billion[5].

The causes of the continent's economic crisis such as the precipitous decline in the terms of trade or the steeply increasing level of indebtedness are well known. In this article it is intended to highlight the main features of structural adjustment programmes to illustrate how they have affected the quality of life of African people, and to raise some questions concerning their compatibility with sustainable development.

Structural adjustment: What is it?

In the minds of many people in both the Third World and the industrialised aid donor countries structural adjustment has become synonymous with the programmes recommended by multi- and bilateral aid donors. For many, structural adjustment implies negative effects; and it is understandable that this should be the case. IMF riots, in earlier times largely confined to Latin America, have become increasingly common in African countries while the growing deterioration of services has been laid, often with considerable justice, at the door of the agreed programmes.

However, this is a travesty of the meaning of adjustment. Essentially, the adjustment of a country's economy means no more than to take into account altered economic circumstances and market conditions. It should be recognised, therefore, that economies adjust during periods of economic growth as well as during times of recession, stagnation, or depression. It is easier, clearly, to accept necessary adjustment during growth periods than at other times. However, the point which needs to be stressed is that adjustment is not necessarily ideological, but rather a means to ensure that the economy continues to produce the goods and services which the market desires in as efficient a manner as possible.

Many critiques of adjustment, therefore, are ill-founded. By identifying adjustment with a particular model of adjustment, these critiques attack the wrong targets. Instead of focussing on the economic model which the multilateral institutions were created to defend and propagate, they attack the institutions; and instead of focussing upon the role of domestic governments, they choose instead to target a perceived imperialist role. It is important to analyse carefully the role of the various actors and their interests when seeking to understand the decisions which lead to the implementation of a particular model of adjustment in the current circumstances.

The essence of the programmes

"Structural adjustment programmes" (SAPs) or "economic recovery programmes" (ERPs) are similar in their essential components. The latter term became more current in the aftermath of growing popular resistance to the implementation of the former. Zambia, for example, having abandoned a "structural adjustment programme" in the wake of the riots on the copper belt in December 1986, introduced an "economic recovery programme" in May 1987, while Tanzania which has a long history of opposition to IMF conditionality, introduced an economic recovery programme following agreement with the IMF in 1987. It therefore appears that the change of terminology arose from political concern by governments seeking to put as positive a public gloss as possible on necessary economic changes.

As Sawyerr observes, African economies, objectively, occupy the same position in the global economic order, by and large being exporters of unprocessed or semi-processed commodities and importers of finished goods with little, if any, control over the prices obtaining. So long as this does not change, the available choices are located within the same constraints. Governments, therefore, may tinker and fine tune but there is little possibility for radical changes of direction. The Tanzanian government came face to face with this reality in the months before it returned to negotiations with the IMF. The country's major aid donors, including the Scandinavian donors, made public their decision not to provide any additional development assistance until such time as Tanzania had negotiated an acceptable adjustment programme. This occurred at a time when a desperate shortage of foreign exchange had brought about massive shortages of truck tyres and diesel which so disrupted internal transport that localised famine conditions resulted despite there being adequate food supplies in the country as a whole.[6] Nor, it should be noted, are either commercial or multilateral sources of credit likely to be any more willing to provide necessary loans to countries in such circumstances.

The broad principles of SAPs or ERPs noted above are clearly also closely identified with an ideological belief in the superiority of the market over economic planning. At their root is an almost mystical faith in the private sector which, operating under freer domestic and external market conditions, will provide the motive power for a resumption of economic growth and development.

To bring this about, all or some of the following six objectives are addressed in every adjustment programme currently in place in sub-Saharan Africa.

1. Reduction of public expenditure: The aim is to reduce, if not eliminate public borrowing and budget deficits via spending cuts.
2. Increase in domestic savings: To be achieved via tax and other incentives.
3. Reduction of the state's economic role: The object is to reduce the state's role to the barest minimum and to ensure that the state enterprises remaining are profit-orientated and less protected and subsidised.
4. Liberalisation of the economy: The above measures fall within this heading. However, more specific liberalisation measures include: devaluation; the abolition of exchange controls; and the removal of import, price and distribution controls.
5. Promotion of exports: This is the flagship of all SAPs and is meant to address the chronic shortage of foreign exchange.
6. Promotion of foreign private investment: Via extensive concessions to foreign investors.[7]

It is worth attempting to illustrate these features through reference to SAPs and ERPs already in place, or supplanted by events. With reference to Nigeria, Bangura noted that the effect of the agreed programmes was drastically underutilised capacity in most industries and massive retrenchment in both the private and public sectors. "In Niger state, for instance, the three-phase retrenchment resulted in about 5,000 public servants losing their jobs".[8]

The Zambian attempt to implement a SAP was marked by wild fluctuations in the value of the Kwacha as the Zambian authorities attempted a managed but market-determined devaluation. In part, this collapsed due to the failure of international donors to meet their commitments of foreign exchange in support of the Kwacha but the experience alone appeared sufficient to discourage any further such attempts. When the currency auctions started in October 1985, the target rate set was K6.5 to US$1. By the end of 1987, after a series of wild fluctuations, including one so-called free fall in which it tumbled 55% in the space of eight weeks, the government fixed the value at K8.06 to US$1.

Under conditions of such changes in the value of the Kwacha, any form of business planning is clearly extremely difficult, if not impossible, particularly for smaller enterprises and the agricultural sector. According to evidence presented at a World Bank seminar in Harare, Zimbabwe, during 1988, the high Kwacha-costs of foreign exchange priced the agricultural sector out of the foreign exchange market even though some of the foreign exchange made available by the World Bank to support the currency auctions had been reserved for this sector of the economy.

Ghana has been particularly favoured by the World Bank in recent years through the implementation of the Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) beginning in 1987. This may have been because of the very high social costs associated with the ERPs which had been implemented. Jonah, for example, comments on the effects of the second phase of the ERP on the Government's wage policy as follows:

> In addition to reducing the work force in the public sector, the Government also decided that wage increases for workers who remained would be skewed in favour of higher officials. It was stated in the Government's report submitted to the Paris Consultative Conference of 1985 that "Salaries will . . . be adjusted upwards skewed in favour of higher levels to provide incentives for expertise" . . . As we have already demonstrated it is the workers at lower levels who have so far been at the receiving end in the redundancy exercise. Workers who are lucky enough not to be caught in the redundancy net will not escape the snare of a much skewed wage and salary structure.[9]

It is too early to do more than comment briefly on the PAMSCAD experience to date and such comments are necessarily impressionistic. It would appear that the PAMSCAD has provided benefits for vulnerable groups in Ghana. Supplementary feeding programmes, for example, seem to be reaching poorer women and children and some revival of rural development would appear to have taken place. Caution is necessary, however, as the Ghanaian authorities have experienced difficulties in their attempts to implement the programme. At least some of the difficulties experienced both by the Government and Ghanaian non-governmental organisations (NGOs), originated in the sheer scale of the programme and the shortage of staff available to put it into practice. But, although cautious optimism appears justified in this instance, it is important to stress that the PAMSCAD was introduced to compensate for the unacceptable human costs deriving from the design of the country's ERP.

In the light of such experience, one is forced to question the utility of the programmes implemented to the Sub-Saharan African development process as spelt out in the UNPAAERD which is based on a collective response by African states on the basis of self-reliance with a view to self-sustaining, in other words, non-dependent, development. The apparent contradiction between this goal and measures which are designed to ensure greater and sustained openness to, and participation in, the international economy does not indicate opposition to participation in international trade. However, it does question the theoretical underpinning of the present approach. In order to further explore this question, evidence of the impact of SAPs on countries' development prospects and their populations is outlined below.

The human impact

At the beginning of 1988, UNICEF published its two volume study, *Adjustment with a Human Face*,[10] which documented the impact of the inhospitable global and national economic climate, and in particular the debt crisis and the measures adopted to resolve it, on the developing world. In brief, the study found evidence of rising malnutrition in ten African, six Latin American and two Asian countries, rising infant mortality rates in four countries (one in Africa), an end to the trend towards improvement in at least twenty-one countries, and an increase in the proportion of low birth-weight babies in at least ten countries. Furthermore, diseases thought to have been eliminated were found to have reappeared. And, approximately two-thirds of developing countries experienced negative or negligible growth during the period 1980-5.

In Africa, at least, such economic decline has continued. According to preliminary growth figures published by the Economic Commission for Africa, the continent's gross domestic product grew by 2.8 per cent during 1988. But population growth of 3 per cent in the same year meant that African peoples' quality of life was again reduced. Sub-Saharan African indebtedness also increased (by 6.5 per cent in 1988) although at a slower rate than in 1987 (18 percent) with almost all of the increase in indebtedness during both years being due to the accumulation of arrears. Although, as we have seen, SAPs aim to balance the trade account, *inter alia* through increased exports, the value of the region's exports fell again in 1988, while that of imports remained steady in spite of the fall in the value of the US dollar, suggesting that the quantity of imports declined during the year. Thus, despite at least three years of applying SAPs, the future of Africa's people appears bleak.

Zambia: A Zambian mother of four outlined just how bleak this future appears to her:

> Prices have rocketed since 1982. The IMF auction certainly meant there were more goods in the shops but they were expensive things that we don't buy. My husband's salary hasn't increased since 1985 so I can't afford to buy even the basics now. We only have meat once a month now — on pay day. When we heard that the subsidy was to be lifted, I felt sure that malnutrition would come to my children.[11]

This Zambian woman's observations on the financial problems facing her family in its daily struggle for enough to eat is one which can be replicated throughout the continent. Fears of not having enough money to buy food, of increasing levels of undernutrition of many children, of the possibility of losing the little money which is available through redundancy, preoccupy more and more people in Africa. And, the programmes have placed still further demands on already over-stretched family budgets. Primary schooling, provided free since independence in most African states, now has to be part-funded by fees. School uniforms are commonplace in most African countries. A pair of children's shoes on the Zambian copperbelt, for example, cost a minimum of K100, regarded as the average monthly wage. Healthcare, where it is still available, is also subject to charges; and, increasingly, the healthcare available is severely restricted due to the unavailability of even basic drugs.

What is particularly worth noting is that people, such as the Zambian woman quoted above, who are feeling the effects of SAPs do not belong to the groups of people with whom non-governmental development organisations, such as CAFOD (the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development) and Oxfam, in the United Kingdom have traditionally related. Traditional partnership relationships have centered around poor rural people, mostly small peasants, the landless, and urban unemployed. What appears to be happening is the emergence of a group of new poor, a ***nouveau pauvre***, drawn from formerly, relatively prosperous people. Such people had earlier worked either in industry or government service. Often they were teachers or health service employees.

Nigeria: Bangura outlines Nigerian redundancy levels as follows:

> A poll by the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria showed that by 31 July 1983 a total of 101 companies had within a period of 12 months closed for a period of between seven and twelve weeks involving a labour force of 20,000 workers.
>
> Rationalisation [of costs] has been more vigorous in industries with a high import content such as automobile plants, pharmaceuticals, the flour mills, poultry, milk, paper products and textiles; and in industries that depend on high government patronage through contracts, such as construction. Retrenchment [of workers] in these industries is very high. Accurate figures have not been compiled but some of the industries where some work has been done, such as on the automobile plants, pharmaceuticals, flour mills, poultry and construction show a slice in the labour force of more than 50%.
>
> Retrenchment is often linked with delays in salary payment, cuts in allowances and fringe benefits and a freeze in promotions, wage increases and new appointments. Other measures include the introduction of various types of levies for education and industrial development. Wage and salary cuts were also introduced by the Babangida administration in December 1985 as part of the economic emergency fund.[12]

Central African Republic: Zoctizoum has presented evidence for the Central African Republic:

> The dismissing of administrative staff condemns a good many families to hunger . . . Dismissals have also affected the semi-public sector where 2,000 wage earners were dismissed in 1982-84. Since 1982 there have been no increases in the public sector's salaries, except those of the army and the police . . . The minimum guaranteed wage has not been updated since 1980 . . . On the other hand, prices have not been frozen and fees for public services have skyrocketed, without forgetting the enormous increase in the cost of imported oil . . . Many small and medium-sized firms have disappeared in the last few years, which has also made many workers unemployed with no unemployment benefits or severance pay.[13]

In Zambia the value of the Kwacha had declined by 700% between mid-October 1985, when the foreign exchange auctions began, and the end of April 1987 . . . Interest rates increased dramatically while the structural adjustment programme was in place. By mid-1986, the cost of borrowing was between 30% and 33%. This led to substantial job losses as firms tried to reduce costs —18,081 during 1986 alone, according to the *Times of Zambia* . . . Debt service commitments as a percentage of export earnings increased fivefold between 1980 and 1986, while loans from commercial banks fell by just under one-third over 1984-85.[14]

Ghana: Jonah states that the second phase of the Ghanaian ERP envisaged redeploying:

> nearly 45,000 [state and para-statal employees] over the three year period of the second phase of the ERP. The decision was apparently based on a survey by the Manpower Utilisation Committee set up in December 1983. It had been estimated that 20% of the workforce in the public sector was underemployed. Therefore, about 31,700 employees could be redeployed in the first instance — 5,500 in the Civil Service and 26,200 in the state enterprises including 20,000 in the Cocoa Marketing Board. At 1985 wages the exercise was estimated to cost Cedi 4.85 billion and provision was made for an additional redeployment of 10,000 workers in 1987 . . . Retrenchment in the Civil/Public Service has so far gone through three phases. During the first phase 18 April-31 May

> 1987, all personnel over 60 years who continued to work without the proper authority as required by existing regulations on re-engagement were retired. Altogether 3,200 persons were affected. During the second phase of retrenchment, 5,000 surplus non-teaching staff of the Ghana Education Service were retired. This was completed by the first week of June 1987. The third phase [involved] the retirement of approximately 9,000 more people from the Civil Service and the Ghana Education Service, not later than the end of October 1987. Altogether 17,200 employees [have been] retrenched by the end of [1987] . . . and the Cocobod [Cocoa Marketing Board] would have sent home about 46,097 workers by the end of December 1987. And yet this is no more than a beginning of a long exercise.[15]

Job losses on such scales have placed a considerable additional burden on those still economically active. Both Jonah and Zoctizoum note that governments expected the agricultural sector, in particular, to absorb the displaced urban workers. To a certain extent this has occurred, although it has been frequently characterised by remittances to urban-based relatives rather than by the return of such people to rural areas of origin. However, the pattern across the continent is by no means even, nor is it adequate to replace the lost wages. What appears to have occurred is a quickening deterioration in the quality of life.

Health: Muntemba reports the result of a survey conducted by the Lusaka-based Zambian National Commission for Development Planning. Investigating the response of Zambian households to an average 70% increase in the cost of high protein foods, she found that the overwhelming majority of surveyed households had reduced their intake of such foods, while a substantial minority had stopped buying such foods altogether.[16] Changes in nutrition patterns such as that identified by Muntemba have seen a steady increase in the number of malnutrition-related admissions and mortality rates in Zambian health institutions. According to the Central Statistical Office, admissions rose from 16,035 in 1981 to 28,620 in 1986. The mortality rate of these admissions also rose — from 14.7% in 1981 to 19% in 1986.

This should be placed within a context of a declining health budget. Clark[17] produces figures which show a decline in the percentage of the national budget allocated to health from 7.8% in 1982 to 5.7% in 1985. The foreign exchange value of the budget declined from US$49.4 million to US$19.7 million, reflecting the far greater loss of the health service's purchasing power. It is little wonder, therefore, that the Zambian health service is seriously understaffed — 59% of established physician posts were unfilled in January 1987, 73% of health centres had staff vacancies, and 51% of all vehicles were out of service. Rural health centres, in particular, experienced sustained unavailability of vital basic drugs. According to Clark[18] the average non-availability of the four most critical drugs in 1986 was as follows:

Drug	Average out of stock	Worst Province	Average out of stock
Oral Rehydration Salts	17 weeks	Western	31 weeks
Chloroquine	4 weeks	Luapula	10 weeks
Penicillin	12 weeks	Central & Eastern	21 weeks
Tetracycline	21 weeks	North West	36 weeks

An unemployed copper miner from Mufulira graphically summed up his perception of the Zambian SAP:

> In our clinic there are no drugs any more. That's what the IMF means to us. But I don't know what these letters stand for.

But what of the much vaunted "successes" of SAPs, in particular the claimed increase in rural incomes arising from increased producer prices?

At the outset, it must be stated that prices for agricultural produce were abysmally low in many African countries. Small farmers, in particular, were badly hit. Many had abandoned earlier attempts to enter the cash economy and reverted to subsistence agriculture. Not only were prices so low as to make it impossible to make a profit but even when produce was marketed, there was seldom anything to buy. Thus, as can be seen from the SAP agreed with the Mozambique government, a twin-track approach was adopted to bring peasant farmers back into the cash economy. The increase in producer prices was meant to increase their cash income while additional foreign exchange was made available to ensure that basic consumer goods reached the rural market.[19]

As might be expected, farmers have responded enthusiastically to the higher prices offered for their produce. In Zambia, maize production levels in the 1984/5 agricultural season exceeded food self-sufficiency levels, rising still further in the 1986/7 season to over 1 million tonnes due in part to increased production in non-traditional maize growing areas. Coffee production levels were planned to increase from 600 tonnes in 1986 to 6,000 tonnes within five years. Foreign exchange earnings from tobacco increased dramatically between 1985 and 1986 — from K8.5 million to K30 million — although this probably had more to do with the fall in the value of the Kwacha. Farmers have diversified into other, high value crops. Sugar production has been encouraged as another source of foreign exchange, while one commercial farm near the Zambian capital, Lusaka, grows strawberries which are airfreighted for sale in European markets. Clearly the price increases proved an incentive for greater production and marketing, reversing years of decline. Similar levels of production increase were obtained in Tanzania and initial reports from Mozambique indicate that in those parts of the country relatively unaffected by Renamo rebels, agricultural production for both the domestic and foreign markets has increased too.[20]

One should not be surprised at such responses. Figures for maize production in Zimbabwe in the immediate post-independence period were even more impressive. In that country, peasant farmers increased their levels of production and marketing in response to price incentives, *inter alia,* so as to exceed production by the commercial sector. It is doubtful whether such claims can be made for increases in agricultural production arising from SAP-inspired price increases.

There are a number of reasons for this. First, price increases alone cannot guarantee sustained production increases such as have been seen in Zimbabwe, for example. What is necessary is a fully integrated pricing and marketing strategy so that producers receive the payment for all that they produce. In part, this requires efficient transport and storage facilities so that crops are not left to rot by the side of the road, or on the farm, awaiting collection. At least some of the increased production achieved by Zambian farmers went to waste for this reason. Secondly, simply increasing the producer price will not ensure that the benefits are shared proportionately by both large and small producers. At least until the latter have established a cash reserve, the parallel increases in the cost of fertilisers (in Zambia, for example, fertiliser prices were increased from K48 to K80 per 50 kilo bag in line with the SAP) will often ensure that small farmers are unable to pay the increased fertiliser prices, and so their production levels remain relatively low. With less to market, they have less disposable income than might have been the case, which is soon swallowed by price increases arising from the abolition of government subsidies on items such as food and increased costs through having to pay for schooling and health care.

Further constraints operating on the possibility of small farmers increasing their cash income include the abolition of subsidies on diesel which puts up both transport and tractor-hire costs, a national shortage of foreign exchange seriously affecting the availability of spares and, hence, the reliability of tractors and transport, and, sometimes, the availability of seeds and fertilisers. Furthermore, reductions of government spending in rural development programmes add a push factor to urban migration, particularly of men. The continent is experiencing an increase in the number of female-headed households as men migrate towards the towns in an increasingly vain search for paid work. The result is a decrease in rural labour availability which reduces the possibility of bringing new land into production.

Such changes in social behavioural patterns have potentially long-term societal implications. For instance CAFOD's African partners report with growing frequency that the economic crisis is leading to changes in traditional family patterns due to the increased migration of men to the towns. Women are reportedly entering into earlier and more numerous relationships. Such changes of social behavioural patterns is especially of concern in the light of the spread of AIDS in parts of the continent. CAFOD, for example, has received reports of women and children infected with the virus in parts of rural Tanzania and southern Sudan as well as Uganda and urban areas of Zambia and Kenya. Without detracting from the individual tragedy, the long-term demands on already overstretched and under-funded health services are potentially immense; as is the threat posed to future development possibilities on the continent.

Whither now?

SAPs, as currently designed, have clearly failed to guarantee an improvement in the quality of life of African people. There is little doubt that some groups have benefitted. There has been an increase in the goods available for sale in shops; and some farmers have increased their incomes. But, as we have seen, benefits such as these have been available, largely, to those groups who were already wealthy. Increases in the quantity and variety of consumer goods in the shops of Dar-es-Salaam, Accra, Lagos or Nairobi have meant little to small scale peasant farmers in those countries, and, arguably, even less to the ***nouveau pauvre*** — those laid off through attempts to reduce the numbers of state employees or to increase the profitability of firms. Indeed, such increased availability may even increase the internal political tensions which arise in periods of increasing unemployment. In this connection, it is worth noting that the IMF riots, or food riots which have occurred on the continent, have been, like their Latin American counterparts, urban-based. Evidence would appear to show that food riots are most likely to erupt when the economic reforms implemented begin to bite seriously into urban standards of living. The Zambian food riots are a case in point. The government announcement which sparked them off, concerned the abolition of the subsidy on the price of breakfast meal which is most commonly eaten in urban areas.

As currently designed and implemented, the SAPs clearly threaten the political stability of African countries. Tensions between government and organised labour over job reductions and wage and salary restraints have emerged in almost all African countries implementing a SAP. To a certain extent, this is inevitable. The function of organised labour, after all, is to protect its members' interests, in particular their jobs and wages. However, left unchecked, such political tensions can easily translate into popular perceptions of political illegitimacy on the part of government, a development which can only be checked by greater repression or by policy turn-arounds. Africa has seen examples of both in the recent past. Zoctizoum[21] for example, noted that army and police salaries were the only ones not to suffer a standstill in the Central African Republic. And, in Zambia, the government announced the abandonment of the subsidy abolition in the wake of the December 1986 food riots.

There are many grounds, therefore, for believing that the SAPs fail to promote development. At best, as may be the case suggested in the UNICEF evidence for Zimbabwe, they have resulted in the development process slowing down; at worst, they have seen a significant deterioration in the life quality of significant numbers of people, as well as bringing about the emergence of a group of new poor, who previously had been selfsufficient. Far from arresting the continent's economic decline, they would appear, in the short-term at least, to be hastening it for many people. The experience of British non-governmental development organisations further illustrates the negative effects of the SAPs. Oxfam, the largest British non-governmental development organisation, has found that it is increasingly being requested to provide replacement funds for services previously provided by governments. In Zambia, for example, Oxfam have agreed to make available funding which will permit the health service in one of the country's provinces to function. Even as straightforward a programme as the provision of a grinding mill has proved a victim of the foreign exchange shortage. In one such case in Tanzania, a CAFOD supported programme took two years to implement with the requested funding having to be returned to London so that it could then be transferred to Kenya as no grinding mills were available in Tanzania. And, having eventually purchased the mill, the Tanzanian partner organisation was unable to run it due to the unavailability of diesel in the country.

Furthermore, the successes achieved, in terms of increased production levels, are not sustainable in the medium- to long-term in the opinion of many. In any event, both the human and the political costs of the programmes are too high for any government to sustain the programmes for the periods envisaged.

More and more frequently, African people are rejecting the effect of the SAPs on their lives. Reports from church sources in Tanzania, for example, tell of peasant farmers rejecting the emphasis on export crop production and defying the legislative protection of coffee trees. More and more instances of peasants poisoning coffee trees and uprooting them when they have died in order to plant food are apparently taking place. Similarly, despite the increased prices paid to producers, smuggling continues apace as farmers trade their produce for goods which they need.

Such instances are both to be welcomed and regretted. They should be welcomed in that they are indicative of a flexibility of response and ability to plan for the future which is necessary for any country to develop. They are to be regretted, however, as they demonstrate the extent to which the political mobilisation of the independence movements has been dissipated by the economic collapse, corruption and disillusionment of some during the post-independence years. For while, as we have already noted, the position of African economies in the international economic order rules out any radical departure from the SAP prescription, this does not deny the possibility of tinkering and fine tuning. As research for UNICEF has shown, some African governments have engaged in this process. Zimbabwe was able to defend its primary health care programme. And Mozambique has both defended its primary health care programme, in the light of the categories of people qualifying for exemption from charges for health care, and has also defended its budget to allow the country to continue to propagate the war against the South African-backed rebels.

It is regrettable that more African governments have not been able to make the best use of the admittedly limited scope for manoeuvre which is available to them. The pace at which SAPs have been implemented is one which would be politically unacceptable in any industrialised country as the snailpace progress of the negotiations over the reform of agricultural policies in the current GATT round too clearly shows. IMF staff argue that the rapid implementation of reforms is necessary in order to limit the possibility of domestic political pressures leading to policy turn-arounds by governments. Such arguments simply do not hold water given the experience of African countries who have abandoned SAPs because of domestic political pressures arising from their human costs.

But African governments could do more. There appears no real reason why the Zambian government, for example, felt it necessary to implement overnight the doubling of the price of breakfast meal which sparked off the country's food riots. Nor, if reports are correct, can the Tanzanian reluctance to try and win more favourable terms from the IMF and the World Bank during those negotiations be understood. Clearly the country was in dire straits but reports that the Tanzanian team did not want to discuss the terms of the agreement are almost incredible.

Nonetheless, the tinkering and fine-tuning which can be carried out is no more than emergency first aid. It is clear that what is necessary is fundamental re-design of the SAPs if they are to result in development which improves African peoples' quality of life. And, the ways in which the programmes need to be re-designed can only be identified by African people themselves although it seems obvious that one such would include delaying the introduction of subsidy cuts in productive sectors of the economy. It appears illogical, for example, to increase producer prices while increasing their costs at the same time as occurred in Zambia when fertiliser and diesel subsidies were abolished.

This means that those drawing up the programme will have to do so from a position of a far more detailed understanding of the economy than is currently the case. And, at least part of such an understanding rests with the people themselves, and not solely in African, European and North American capitals. For, without such popular involvement at all stages of the process, SAPs appear doomed to continue to carry with them unacceptable costs and act as a brake on the continent's development prospects.

Footnotes

1. Sawyerr, Akilagpa, *The Politics of Adjustment*, UN Economic Commission for Africa, ECA/ICHD/88/29, Addis Ababa
2. See "Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery 1986-9" adopted in July 1985 at OAU Meeting, Addis Ababa
3. For a discussion of the special session and the negotiations surrounding the adoption of UNPAAERD, see Barbara Adams and Martina Lent, Accounting for Africa at the United Nations, Quaker United Nations Office, New York, 1988
4. UN General Assembly Document A/42/560, p.31, para 130
5. United Nations, Financing Africa's Recovery, 24 February 1988, p.12, para 30
6. Cleary, Seamus, *Tanzania: Surviving against the Odds*, Catholic Fund for Overseas Development, London, forthcoming
7. Sawyerr op. cit.
8. Bangura, Yusuf, *Crisis and Adjustment: The Experience of Nigerian Workers*, IFAA, London 1987, p.9
9. Jonah, Kwesi, *The Social Impact of Ghana's Adjustment Programme 1983-86*, IFAA, London 1987, pp.9-10
10. Cornia, Giovanni Andrea, Richard Jolly and Frances Stewart (eds), *Adjustment with a Human Face; Protecting the Vulnerable and Promoting Growth* Vols 1 & 2, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1987 and 1988
11. Clark, John with David Keen, Debt and Poverty: A Case Study of Zambia, OXFAM, Oxford, May 1988, pp.24-5
12. Bangura, op. cit. p.7
13. Zoctizoum, Y., *The Socio-Economic Consequences of IMF Policy in the Smaller African Countries: The Case of the Central African Republic*, IFAA, London 1987, p.12
14. Cleary, Seamus, Zambia: A Country in Crisis, Catholic Fund for Overseas Development, London, forthcoming
15. Jonah, op. cit. p.4

16. Mutemba, Dorothy Chiyoosha, *The Impact of the IMF/World Bank on the people of Africa with special reference to Zambia and especially women and children*, IFAA, London 1987, p.24

17. Clark, op.cit. p.28

18. Clark, op. cit. p.30

19. Cleary, Seamus, *Mozambique: An emergency caused by war*, Catholic Fund for Overseas Development, London 1988, p.30

20. Cleary, op. cit. pp.28-31

21. Zoctizoum, op. cit. p.12