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INTEGRATING POVERTY REDUCTION POLICIES INTO DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

A Comparison between Ethiopia, Cameroon, Mali and Senegal

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Introduction

The objective of this paper is to highlight the main common features - and by the way to explain the reasons for difference - of the poverty reduction strategies presently implemented in four particular sub-Saharan Africa countries : Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mali and Senegal.

At first sight, these countries appear extremely different in their size and level of wealth as show the population, the per capita GDP (purchasing power parity) and the Human Development Index (HDI) (see Table 1). Ethiopia is the biggest country, but also the poorest one. Mali and Senegal are Sahelian countries related by strong historical and cultural links, and they belong, with Cameroon, to the CFA franc zone. Cameroon and Ethiopia are both a mosaic of various provinces and diverse cultural groups.

Table 1. Country Main Characteristics in 1994

Country	Population	Per capita GDP ppa $US	Rank	HDI	Rank
Cameroon	12,800,000	2,120	121	0.468	133
Senegal	8,100,000	1,596	134	0.326	160
Mali	10,500,000	543	172	0.229	171
Ethiopia	54,600,000	427	174	0.244	170

Data sources: *Human Development Report : Human Development and Poverty*, UNDP, Oxford University Press, Oxford,1997.

At the exception of Cameroon, they are among the 16 poorest countries in the world. Including Cameroon they belong to the 43 poorest ones, which means the last quarter in the world's per capita GDP distribution. Mali and Ethiopia, the poorest ones, have an HDI similar to their level of their per capita GDP, while Cameroon, and particularly Senegal, have a better GDP's ranking than the HDI's one, showing that their human capital do not correspond to their economic level.

However, a precise analysis of the historical phases in their development strategy brings up similarities which relate to a common pattern.

First, in all of them the state initiated and controlled the development strategy even if the degree of its involvement varies strongly according to the period and the country considered. It ranges from the dirigist attitudes of Ethiopia (1974-91) and the African socialism in Mali (1960-68), to the centralized five-years plan organization in Cameroon (1960-82) and in Mali (1972-1986) and the permanent interventionism of Senegal (1960-79).

Second, they all knew a severe economic crisis around the 80s. It was either the results of a boom in their exports followed by a fall in the corresponding world prices (e.g. peanuts and phosphates for Senegal, oil, coffee and cocoa for Cameroon) or the droughts combined with the inability to benefit from the market circumstances due to excessive centralization (Mali and Ethiopia). They had to go through the various steps of structural adjustment and economic reforms (Senegal 1979, Cameroon 1986, Mali 1988, Ethiopia 1991). Consequently, new layers of poverty appear besides the existing chronic (or structural) poverty. Nowadays, they have to overcome the burden of a heavy debt service which reduces the degree of freedom in their choice of a development policies. Consequently, they are still in the search for an appropriate strategy that could relate growth to macroeconomic balances and poverty reduction.

Third, they all faced, at a time or another, food security issues related to insufficient harvest causing malnutrition (Cameroon and Senegal) or severe droughts and famines (Mali, Ethiopia). They also host separatist movements which express their peculiar identities through violent acting and political unrest which add to the social issues resulting from the economic crisis and the adjustment process. This tends to generate new poverty by making difficult the implementation of reforms and the design of an efficient long-term development strategy.

While they are trying to build a modern state based on the nation principle, they are also participating in the process of economic integration through the UEMOA (Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa) for Mali and Senegal, the CEMAC (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa) for Cameroon, and the COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa) for Ethiopia. UEMOA, with its objective of economic and monetary union, is the most advanced of these free trade zones, customs taxes on internal products being regularly reduced and a common external rate implemented.

However, the specificity of these countries explains the differences in degree of their economic reactions and the various sequences of their historical evolution. A series of events stroke them differently. For instance, droughts occurred in Mali in 1972-73 and 1982-84, and in Ethiopia, in 1973-75 and 1982-85, leading to severe famines, and disorganizing the economy. The countries belonging to the CFA franc zone had to bear the sudden devaluation of this currency in 1994 and its social consequences. Finally, after 1977 the long standing conflict with the people of Eritrea and Ogaden escalated leading to a war that disorganized Ethiopia and generated massive poverty.

Within this context, the following issues are to be considered. First, to what extent did the past development strategies combined the economic growth with a reduction of poverty ? Second, when this happened what were the main characteristics of this combination of programs and policies ? Third, what were the main difficulties and obstacles encountered that should be overcome for the future ?

1. Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction

A review of the patterns of growth since the 70s, in these countries, helps understanding the economic models which were at work during this period and the related evolution in their standards of living.

1.1. The Past Patterns of Growth

It is difficult to understand the key turning points in each of the pattern of growth without linking them to the key political events that appear in a country history. This is particularly true, since each country knew its own specific evolution.

Cameroon, Mali and Senegal became independent in 1960. They initiated centralized development strategies controlled by the state through its national boards, state-owned enterprises and regular four or five-years plans. This was done under the leadership of left-wing regimes which wanted to build an "African socialism" able to enhance growth while taking social issues into account. Only Senegal had a democratic multiparty system, while Mali and Cameroon had autocratic regimes with a one party rule. At that time, the African socialism idea was shared by a lot of countries in Africa such as Ghana, Tanzania, etc., even though the effective implementation strongly differ from one country to the other. Ethiopia was under the leadership of Emperor Haile Selassie, who initiated through the 1955 constitution a series of economic development and social reforms such as major land reforms, emancipation of slaves and universal suffrage. This period was a period of growth for all countries, even if it was not always equitable and often under-efficient.

It is in the middle of the 70s that a series of key events impacted strongly on the economic life of each country. In Mali and in Ethiopia, the 1972-73 drought had a negative impact on agriculture growth and generated famines. However, in Mali, the GDP growth still averaged 4.4%. In Ethiopia, the weaknesses of a regime that neglected domestic problems such as rural underdevelopment, rampant inflation, unemployment in urban areas, a great inequality in the distribution of wealth, and corruption appear clearly. In 1974, through a military coup a marxist government went in power to establish an Ethiopian type of socialism and a single political party. All agricultural land, formal food trade and private industries were nationalized. A centralized development strategy was set up with the objective of reducing poverty and boosting economic growth through subsidies and public allocation of goods. In Cameroon, the exploitation of petroleum brought new resources, increased exports and pushed up the GDP growth to 10%. In Senegal, after the peanuts boom of 1973-74, excessive taxation lead to a decrease in the production of this export slowing down growth and generating a deficit in public finance.

The 80s saw the implementation of structural adjustment programs in the French-speaking countries, due to a fall in the GDP growth, large public deficits and high indebtedness. Senegal initiated its first program in 1980 by reducing investment, and to a certain extent public salaries. It, then, restructured the production system through a new agricultural policy and a new industrial policy. Mali, began to restructure the cereals sector in 1981 and to reduce the public sector in 1988. Cameroon decreased by its own public expenditures after the 1986 economic crisis and fall into the structural adjustment process after 1989.

The 90s is a period of renewal surge emerging through a set of difficult social issues. First, except for Senegal, democratization was imposed in 1991 through a series of political unrest and demonstration in Mali and Cameroon, and through the success of the liberation movement in Ethiopia. Second, all countries went through a series of serious and often painful adjustment measures (salaries reduction, devaluation of the Birr and the CFAF) and economic reforms (privatization of state-owned enterprise, liberalization of the production chains) that brings a renewal of growth. Third, the political consciousness of the need to reduce poverty rose in all governments. In Ethiopia, it became the overarching objective of the current economic policy. In Mali, it went further than the regular issue of food security. In Senegal and Cameroon, it overruled the social impact of structural adjustment programs.

Indicators of Macroeconomic Performance

The distributions of the real per capita GDP and private consumption over the period 1970-95 are good proxies to depict the evolution in the overall level of living, since they are both related to the GDP and the population growths. They are available for the period 1970-95, except for Ethiopia, for which they can be gathered from 1983.

Data from households surveys would be more precise to describe the population standards of living. However, they are rather scarce, and only available on particular dates or for particular regions. For instance, national surveys are available in Cameroon for 1983-84 and 1996, in Mali for 1988-89 and 1994, in Senegal for 1973, 1991-92 and 1994, in Ethiopia for 1989 and 1995. It is, therefore, difficult to have a global overview of the evolution.

The general pattern which emerges from the following figures is twofold (see Figure 1). First, the average per capita real GDP growth was either nul or negative over the period. The per capita level of 1995 is nearly equivalent the 1970's one (and maybe 1960's one when considering the growth between these two dates). This means that all increase in the real GDP was absorbed by the population growth. This can be considered as the implicit social preference for a bigger population market than for a rise in the level of living of all individuals. Second, each country has a different pattern of growth along two basic lines: either a slow but regular decrease due to the under-efficiency of the economic model chosen (e.g. Ethiopia and Senegal) or an increase followed by the equivalent decrease due to the limits of the economic model (e.g. Mali and Cameroon).

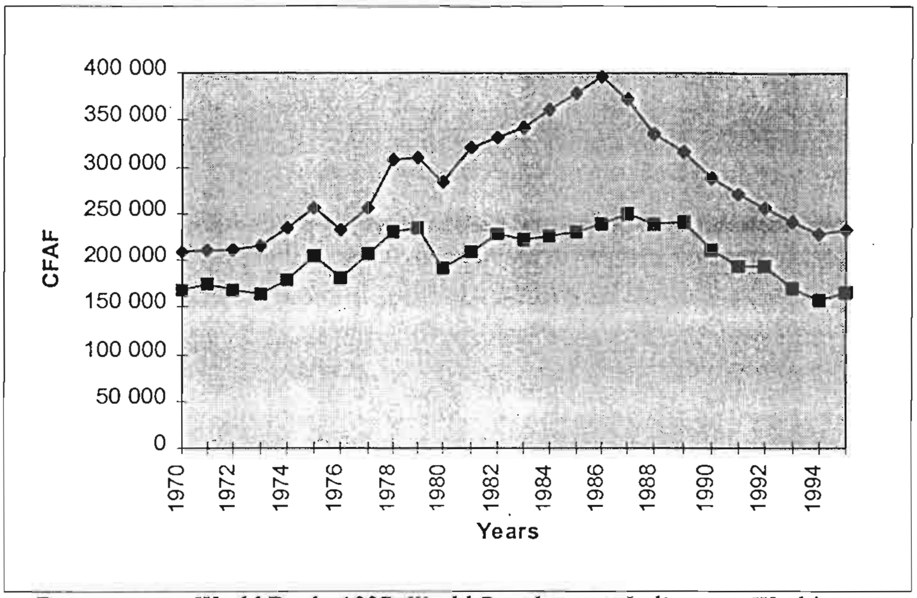
For the first case, we have insufficient data for Ethiopia to cover the whole period, but a fall of about 20% in the real GDP per capita appears between the beginning of the 80s and the 90s. Since 1992, the GDP per capita improved due to the change in the development strategy, but the increase still remains insufficient to compensate the population growth. Senegal, facing an average population growth of 2.8% since the sixties, knew a regular decrease of 0.2% of the real per capita GDP. Following the 1994 CFAF devaluation, an increase appears since 1995.

For the second case, the real GDP per capita improved for Mali until 1978, then decreased strongly until 1985. Since then, the increase in the real GDP is effective, but unable to compensate the population growth. Cameroon had the most extreme pattern with the per capita GDP improving strongly until 1986, followed by a regular after fall until 1994. For these two countries, 1995 is a year of growth renewal.

Figure 1.

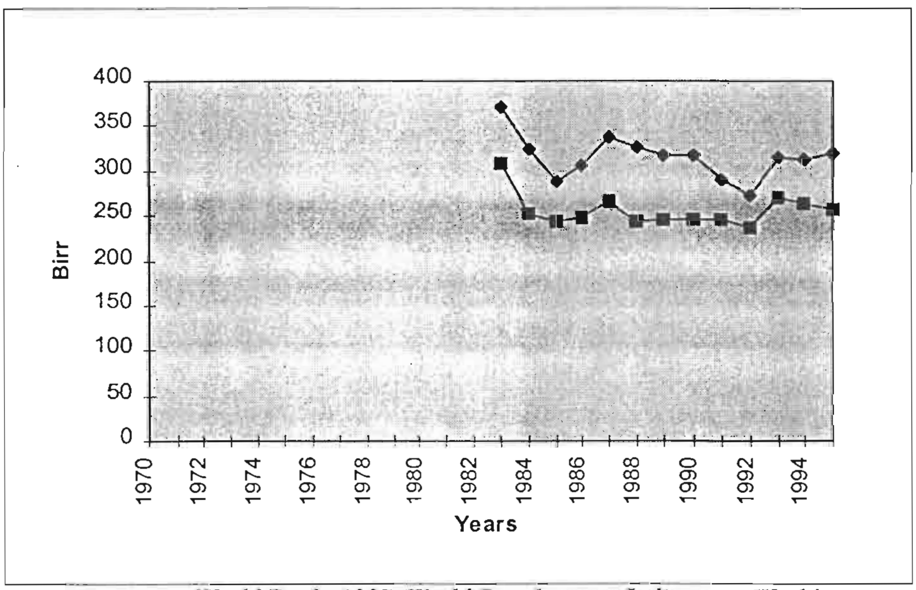
Evolution of Real per Capita GDP and Consumption 1970-95 (base 1987)

Cameroon



Data sources: World Bank, 1997, *World Development Indicators*, Washington.

Ethiopia

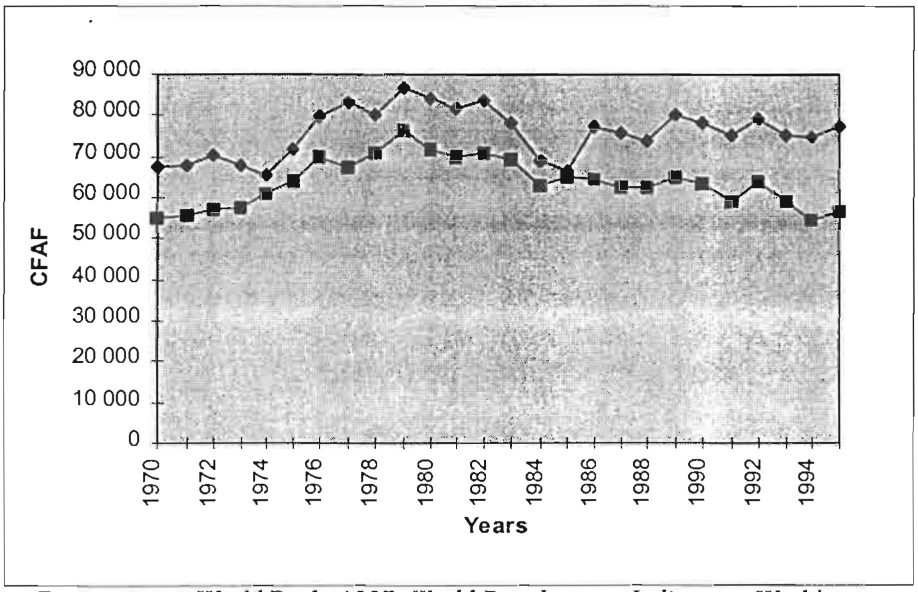


Data sources: World Bank, 1997, *World Development Indicators*, Washington.

Figure 1. (continued)

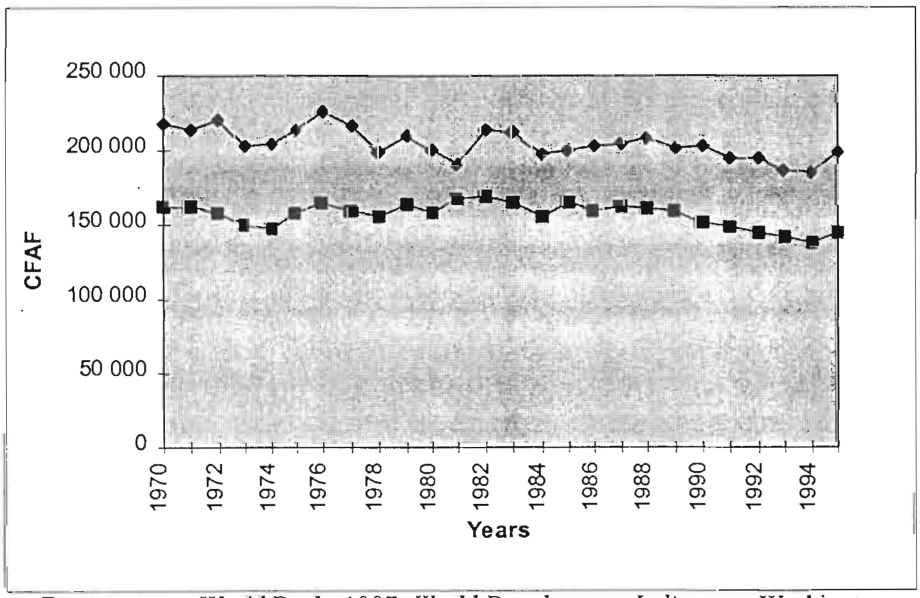
Evolution of Real GDP and Consumption per Capita 1970-95 (base 1987)

Mali



Data sources: World Bank, 1997, *World Development Indicators*, Washington.

Senegal



Data sources: World Bank, 1997, *World Development Indicators*, Washington.

The Economic Models

Facing these four country experiences over the 1970-95 period, one can makes the following remarks on their respective economic models

First, the "dirigist" way which was chosen by all of them, while increasing the level of production at the beginning of the period (in the sixties), did not lead to a sustainable growth path, when faced to the greater internationalization of the world economy at the end of the period. The political economy[2] named "African socialism" which was chosen as the framework for guiding policy decisions, while creating innovative possibilities at the beginning of its implementation, appeared to be too rigid for small economies which need to be more adaptive to the environment and able to promote individual and competitive initiatives.

The main motivation was to reduce poverty and inequalities while promoting a socially controlled development. It should have directed the distribution of the produced value added, through state-owned enterprises and commercial national board, towards the poorest people. In fact, these institutions proved to be less than efficient and to generate deficits when they were supposed to produce the value added required to satisfy both investment needs and distribution objectives. The major reason of this situation was their subordination to the political power, with its internal conflicts, and the absence of competitive constraints which obliged them to make profit to survive.

The results spoke by themselves. In Ethiopia, the real per capita GDP decrease by 20% between 1980 and 1991. in Cameroon, the increase of the GDP until 1978 (4%) was not as efficient as it could have been compared to similar countries (such as Côte d'Ivoire). When it accelerated till 1986, it was essentially the result of the oil boom. Then, from 1986 to 1994, the fall of export prices decreased the real per capita GDP by 38%. In Mali, the real GDP growth was also under-efficient (4.4% between 1972 and 1980). In Senegal, where interventionist measures discouraged the peasants and the small entrepreneurs, the real per capita GDP decreased between 1960 and 1990.

Second, a series of external shocks reduced the efficiency of the production systems. These include the droughts (e.g. Mali and Ethiopia in 1972-74 and 1982-84), the changes in the exports prices (e.g. peanuts price fall after 1974, cocoa and coffee after 1978, cotton after 1976) and the degradation in the real terms of change after 1985. Internal problems added to the difficulties, for instance the civil war (Cameroon beginning of the 60s, Ethiopia end of 80s), the military coup or attempt (Mali in 1968, Ethiopia in 1974, Cameroon attempt in 1983) and the social turmoil (Ethiopia at the end of the 70s, Cameroon, Mali and Senegal at the beginning of the 90s) resulting from failure in the social cohesion and the social justice. These events often act as catalyst to the emergence of the economic crisis and reveal the weaknesses of the economic model chosen.

[2] For the updated definition of this classical concept I refer to Jean Drèse, Amartya Sen and Athar Hussain in *The Political Economy of Hunger : Selected Essays*, WIDER Studies in Development Economics, Oxford University Press, 1995, 626 p.

Third, growth reappeared after the effective implementation of economic reforms and the shift towards more liberalism and market rules like in Mali (1981), in Cameroon (1982), in Senegal (1984) and in Ethiopia (1991). Unfortunately, part of the stabilization and structural adjustment measures were not implemented or were delayed to avoid political unrest. Therefore, internal adjustment became insufficient to correct the macroeconomic unbalances and to restore growth in Mali (after 1989), in Cameroon (after 1992) or to succeed in the implementation of new policies in Senegal for agriculture in 1984 and for industry in 1986. Changes in the external exchange rate through devaluation was then required for the Ethiopian Birr (devalued by 58% in 1992) and the CFA Franc (devalued by 50% in 1994). Growth reappeared in Ethiopia (5% on average between 1992 and 1995), in Mali (2.3% in 1994 and 6% in 1995), in Cameroon (3.1% in 1995 and 5.5% in 1996), and in Senegal (2% in 1994 and 4.8% in 1995).

Finally, all countries joined the democratic and multiparty rule at the beginning of the 90s (1991 for Cameroon and Ethiopia, 1992 for Mali), bringing more transparency (through information and public debates), a better governance and decentralization processes (local elections in Cameroon, independence of Eritrea in 1993, Ethiopian constitution proclaiming a nine states federation, NGOs recognition). This was result of two joint phenomena: the emergence of an educated middle class who wants to take its destiny into its hand, and the surge of the economic crisis which makes integration in the production and decision-making more difficult.

These facts confirm the emergence at the beginning of the 90s of a new economic model, based on a more democratic approach and open to the market rules at the local and international levels. This raises the issue of the impact on the poor of these changes in the development strategies.

1.2. The Macroeconomic Impact on Poverty

It is worth noting, that before the 90s, there was much less concern about poverty in itself. This is clearer for Cameroon, Mali and Senegal than for Ethiopia where the Mengitsu regime, once in power, set as explicit objective to its policy the reduction of poverty and inequality through a state-oriented development. In the 60s and the 70s the focus was put on a development believed to be more equitable since it was based on an interventionist ideology. The key mechanism remained the trickle down effect as a result of the traditional and state-controlled distribution of resources.

In the richest countries, Cameroon and Senegal, the governments were more keen to satisfy the urban class due to its political power, than the poorest people, mostly situated in the rural areas and the isolated urban districts. In the less developed countries, like Mali, governments claim that everybody was poor and should benefit from the public aid, poverty being associated to food insecurity since the 1972-73 famine. In both cases, the key issues were to avoid the social consequences of the economic crisis and of the related structural adjustment programs on the middle class. NGOS, whose main objectives were to help the poorest people, often act besides the official institutions.

This attitude changed, in the CFA zone, at the beginning of the nineties when the issue of poverty appeared to be doubled by a problem of inequality in the access to basic goods and services and in the distribution of legal rights. It shows that the emergence of poverty consciousness did not occur in the four countries at the same time. In Ethiopia, the transition government made, in 1991, poverty reduction as its overarching objective. In Cameroon, the need to design explicit poverty reduction strategies was only recognized officially in 1994, a few months after the CFAF devaluation. In Senegal and Mali, this happened earlier since poverty was always related to droughts, food security and malnutrition.

To measure the incidence of poverty two different ways are usually followed: the number of poor is estimated, based on a poverty line, to express the lack of income, and a series of key social indicators is provided to describe the satisfaction of the basic needs.

Monetary Poverty and Inequality

One-shot surveys conducted over the period 1971-96 give estimates of the poor headcount ratio at the national level, for urban and rural areas, for the main cities (i.e. Douala and Yaounde) and the capitals Addis-Ababa and Dakar (see Table 2).

Table 2. Poverty Incidence

	1971-78	1983-84	1989	1992	1994	1996
Cameroon		40% Rural: 44% Urban: 25% Cities: 2%				51% Rural: 62% Urban: 21% Cities: 25%
Ethiopia	Urban: 60% Addis Ababa 1976: 51% 1978: 56%		Rural: 56%	60% Urban: 60% Addis Ababa 55%	Rural 41%	
Mali				40% Rural: 49% Urban: 10%		
Senegal				33% Rural: 40% Urban: 16% Dakar: 16%		

Data sources: (i) *Cameroon: Diversity, Growth and Poverty Reduction*, Report No. 13167-CM, Washington, World Bank, 1995; (ii) *Conditions de vie des ménages au Cameroun*, DSCN, 1996; (iii) S. Dercon et P. Krishnan, *Poverty in Rural Ethiopia*, CSA, 1994; (iv) Senegal: *An Assessment of Living Conditions*, World Bank, 1995.

The incidence of poverty varies in each country. In Senegal and Mali, it was in 1992, respectively 33% and 40%, which represents the lowest incidence among the four countries. In Cameroon, it rose from 40% in 1983-84 to 51% in 1996, while it remains on average at about 60% in Ethiopia all over the period. This is consistent with the evolution of the real per capita GDP (see Figure 1). However cross-country comparisons are not reliable due to the differences in the methodologies used. For instance, Cameroon used in 1996 an absolute poverty line (2,400 kcal per capita per day) and in 1983-84 a relative poverty lines (the 40%

poorest). Senegal also used the absolute poverty line of 2,400 kcal per capita per day in 1992, but Ethiopia used 2,100 kcal per capita per day for the urban areas and various poverty lines for the rural areas.

The rural areas, as a whole, suffer more from deprivation than the urban areas (e.g. Cameroon 62% rural and 21% urban, Mali 49% rural and 10% urban, Senegal 40% rural and 16% urban). The great majority of the poor lives in rural areas (75% in Ethiopia, 78% in Senegal, 93% in Mali). However, it seems that poverty has increased more rapidly in all urban areas since the implementation of the economic reforms. In Cameroon, poverty increased in the main cities from 2% in 1983-84 to 30% in 1993 (it may have then decreased to 20% in 1996 with the renewal of growth), and in rural areas from 45% in 1983-84 to nearly 60% in 1996. In Ethiopia, based on panel data, rural poverty decreased between 1989 (56%) and 1994 (41%), which is confirmed by the fact that 70% of the households declared an increase in the level of their real consumption between these dates. This may be the combined result of the return to peace and the liberalization of the economy.

Within a country, the incidence of poverty is unequally distributed among the various regions (e.g. between 57% and 66% in Cameroon and between 13% and 66% in Ethiopia), and among the cities (e.g. Addis Ababa 60% and Mekele 80%; Douala 19% and Yaounde 29%), in relation to their level of development. This gives a first idea of inequality and justifies decentralization as a way of promoting better focused actions aiming at reducing poverty at the local level. This way of assessing inequality can be completed by the Gini index which expresses inequality in the distribution of income or consumption. However, information on this topic is only available for a few years and not for Ethiopia (see Table 3).

Table 3. Measurement of Inequality: the Gini Index

	1983-84	1994	1996
Cameroon	0.49 Yaounde: 0.49 Douala: 0.44 Urban: 0.45 Rural: 0.39		0.42 Yaounde: 0.44 Douala: 0.46 Urban: 0.47 Rural: 0.34
Ethiopia			
Mali		0.54 Rural: 0.63 Urban: 0.36	
Senegal		0.50 Urban higher	

Data sources: (i) S.G. Lynch, *Income Distribution, Poverty and Consumer Preferences in Cameroon*, 1991; (ii) *Conditions de vie des ménages au Cameroun*, DSCN, 1996; (iii) V. Jamal, Aspects of Urban Poverty, ILO, 1982; (iv) Senegal: *An Assessment of Living Conditions*, World Bank, 1995.

Mali, with 0.54, has the highest value for the Gini index while Cameroon and Senegal are in the average range compared to other African countries such as Niger (0.36 in 1992 but 0.42 in 1990), Côte d'Ivoire (0.44 in 1985 and 0.37 in 1988), Ghana (0.34 in 1992), Madagascar (0.43 in 1993), Guinea-Bissau (0.56 in 1991) and Kenya (0.58 in 1992).

Except the case of Mali, the Gini index appears to be higher in the urban areas. However, this is not confirmed by the P-alpha measures (the poverty gap index) concerning the depth of poverty. The inequality among the poor is greater in rural Senegal than in Dakar or in the other cities.

Strong variations exist among the regions. In Cameroon, the Gini index fluctuates between 0.37 (Rural North) and 0.41 (Rural South) in 1984, and between 0.29 (Forest) and 0.38 (Savannah) in 1996. In Senegal, the poverty gap index fluctuates from 0.03 in Dakar to 0.16 in the rural areas.

Concerning the parallel evolution of poverty and inequality, it is difficult to formulate any strong conclusion. The Cameroon and Ethiopia sets of data gave contradictory results. In Cameroon, the Gini index decreased between 1983-84 and 1996, while poverty incidence increased. In Ethiopia, in the rural areas, both the poverty gap index and the poverty incidence decreased between 1989 and 1994. (see Table 4).

Table 4. Evolution of Poverty and Inequality

	1983-84	1989	1994	1996
<u>Cameroon</u>				
Poverty incidence	0.40			0.51
Gini	0.49			0.42
Poverty gap				0.16
<u>Ethiopia</u>				
Poverty incidence		0.56	0.41	
Poverty gap		0.27	0.16	

Data sources: (i) S.G. Lynch, *Income Distribution, Poverty and Consumer Preferences in Cameroon*, 1991; (ii) *Conditions de vie des ménages au Cameroun*, DSCN, 1996; (iii) S. Dercon et P. Krishnan, *Poverty in Rural Ethiopia*, CSA, 1994.

Human Poverty and Social Indicators

The human poverty index, which takes into account the life expectancy before 40, the adult literacy rate, the access to safe water and to health centers, and children malnutrition, gives a different view of poverty. Even if the reliability of this indicator is not always good due to the variety of its statistical sources. Calculated on a set of 78 developing countries, it gives the following results for Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mali and Senegal (see Table 5).

Table 5. The Human Poverty Index

	HPI	Rank HPI	Rank HDI	HDI
Cameroon	0.314	41	45	0.468
Senegal	0.487	68	67	0.326
Mali	0.547	74	74	0.229
Ethiopia	0.562	75	73	0.244

Data sources: *Human Development Report : Human Development and Poverty*, UNDP, Oxford University Press, Oxford,1997.

The distribution of the HPI index shows the diverse levels of poverty. While their ranking remains similar to the HDI's one, it not always consistent with the poverty incidence distribution as provided in table 2, especially for Ethiopia and Senegal. The differences in the methodologies and the unreliability of some of the statistical sources used, may be an explanation of this inconsistency.

Some key social indicators such as life expectancy, infant mortality rate, malnutrition rate, illiteracy rate, school enrollment rate, show an improvement in the long term evolution of poverty. For instance, life expectancy and the primary gross school enrollment rate improve in all countries between the 60s and the 90s (see Table 6), even if they remain low compared to the corresponding average for sub-Saharan Africa (respectively 52 years and 71%) and for the low income countries (respectively 63 years and 100%).

Table 6. Improvement in Life Expectancy and Primary School Enrollment

Life expectancy (in years)	1960-65	1970-75	1980-85	1989-95
Cameroon	42	45	50	57
Ethiopia			40	49
Mali		39	44	46
Senegal	37	43	45	50
School enrollment (%)				
Cameroon		89	102	100
Ethiopia	15	24	31	25
Mali		24	23	31
Senegal		41	56	58

Data sources: Based on *World Development Indicators* and *Social indicators of Development*, World Bank, Washington 1997.

The same tendency occurs for the adult illiteracy rates, the infant mortality rates, the malnutrition prevalence and the access to safe water. However, it is worth noting that this improvement is much less noticeable in the 90s than before, since some of these indicators tend to stabilize (e.g. life expectancy) or even to decrease in some countries (e.g. girls primary school enrollment rate in Cameroon and access to safe water in Senegal).

This type of indicators appears to be less affected by the economic crisis, the related political changes and the adjustment policies. They express the long-term reduction in the structural poverty that occurs since the 60s, while the monetary poverty incidence and the related inequalities show the short-term effects of current policies on the conjunctural poverty.

Stabilization and Adjustment Policies

Implemented since the beginning of the eighties in the four countries, the stabilization and adjustment policies aimed at reestablishing macro-economic balances (i.e. control of price inflation, budget deficit, external deficit), at improving the administrative and productive system (restructuring of the banking system, privatization of state-owned enterprises, liberalization of agriculture production chains or "filières", administrative reform) and at restoring confidence toward the country and its government. This is important to attract national and foreign investors and to stimulate the return of private and public capital flows. After the devaluation, public aid increased but private investors still remained cautious. In that way, the Ethiopian government managed better than Cameroon and Senegal. But the level of internal savings still remains low, despite the generalization of informal financial systems such as the tontines or equivalent.

The adjustment measures did not affect all social categories in the same way, some hurt mostly the poor while other benefit to them. For instance, the devaluation, with the rise in domestic prices, affected mainly the urban people among which the poor involved in the informal sector. In the rural areas, while the food crop producers were also deeply affected, the export producers, who are mostly small-holders in the cocoa and coffee, peanuts, sesame, cereals production chains benefited from this measure. Those working in the exports sector either in agriculture (cotton, rubber, banana, tea production chains, etc.) or in industry (e.g. agro-industries and oil related products) benefited from the devaluation. The liberalization of the production chains mostly improved the situation for the small-holders like the Cameroon coffee and cocoa farmers in 1991, or the Mali cereals producers in 1987. In Ethiopia, rural poverty decreased strongly between 1989 (56%) and 1994 (41%).

The laid-off of civil servants following the administrative reform, and the restructuring or privatization of state-owned enterprises, still remains a key issue. It happened in Mali in 1991, Ethiopia in 1992, in Cameroon in 1991 and 1996. Civil servants cannot be classified among the poor people when considering their relative income, even if they redistribute part of it through the traditional obligations and social events such as funerals, wedding, social obligations, child fosterage, school children, etc.). However, once they are laid-off, most of them have difficulties to find a new job and are enable to initiate productive activities. Therefore, they contribute to the increase of the urban conjunctural poverty.

The combination of various adjustment measures over a ten years period of time changed the all set of rules. The small holders in agriculture, the independent workers in urban areas faced the price increase of foreign inputs, the fluctuation in the world price of exports, the introduction of new taxes, etc. Therefore, they have to adapt accordingly by undertaking a series of innovative actions such as the setting-up of cooperative in the rural areas, district committees in the urban areas (e.g. the democratization of the Kebeles in Ethiopia), information system on the price fluctuation, etc. This may also brought a few adverse effects such as the decrease in the quality of exports (e.g. cocoa in Cameroon) that needed to be monitored and corrected.

2. The Poverty Reduction Policies and Programs

Related to the recent increase in the consciousness that poverty could be eradicated by appropriate policies, a series of programs and policies were designed and implemented with that objective. They may also have an impact on the distribution of inequality. But to reach this objective they have to focus on the main causes of poverty, in its structural and conjunctural sides, to propose well focused actions and policies.

2.1. Addressing the Major Causes of Poverty

A few basic causes contributed to the remaining of poverty at its present level or to its increase. They include uneven and conflict-related events, the high population growth and under-efficient policies.

Famines and conflicts are the first drastic causes of poverty generation. It is mainly transitional poverty, but since the disorganization of the infrastructures and the productive system contributes to the permanence of the structural poverty. Droughts occurred in Mali and Ethiopia, civil wars in Cameroon and Ethiopia, conflict rose between Mali and Burkina-Faso, separatist unrest continues in Mali and in Senegal. The civil war in Nigeria, due to the migration of the Ibo people, also had an impact on neighboring countries such as Cameroon.

The population growth rate may also be a cause of poverty, especially when it is higher than the real GDP growth rate. This happened regularly in Senegal and explained the permanent decrease of the per capita GDP, but also in Mali after 1979 and in Cameroon after 1986. The population growth rate remains high in all countries. In Mali, it was 3% over the period 1980-90 and 3.2% for 1990-94, in Ethiopia it was 3% over the period 1981-91 and about 3.4% nowadays. In Senegal and Cameroon, the rate of growth begins to decline but still remains around 3%. More interesting are the changes in the fertility rates that shows the emergence of a "demographic transition period" where the households would have less children but would spend more, in time and money, for their education and their health. In Senegal, the fertility rate went from 7.2 children per woman in 1960 to 5.8 over the period 1989-94, while in Mali from 7.1 in 1970 to 6.9 over the period 1989-94. However, this remains higher than the average of 5.9 children for sub-Saharan Africa.

Inappropriate policies are the third cause of poverty. They did not generate the productive initiatives that are needed to enhance growth, and therefore, did not contributed to the poverty reduction as they should have. In the four countries, the dirigist and interventionist policies of the 60s and 70s generated under-efficient growth leading to the restructuring of the economy in the 80s and the poverty alleviation objective in the 90s. Within the emergence of a new pattern of sustainable and equitable growth strategy, it may be hoped that this cause, at least in the future, could be under control.

2.2. Short-term and Targeted Actions

A distinction needs to be made between actions which are implemented to solve short term issues and the macro and sector policies that act in a longer term. Their objectives are different, even if each of them tackles a specific aspect of poverty. The short term actions are focussed towards specific socio-economic groups considered as poor, because they have been affected by dramatic events or adjustment measures, and lack a particular attribute that contributed to poverty: for instance, no lodging, insufficient income, unemployment, malnutrition, etc. They are designed and implemented to solve a specific urgent issue, expecting that in the longer term this issue will be tackled and solved by sector policies, within an appropriate macro-economic context. When possible, self-targeting is preferable to decrease the cost of such action and to ensure that the population are effectively reached (in order to decreasing the risk of targeting errors).

Instances of such actions include the safety nets that have been implemented for the urban poor (e.g. labor intensive public works in Cameroon, urban food umbrella projects in Ethiopia), the rural poor (production assistance for the poorest of poor rural households in Ethiopia), the refugees (e.g. rehabilitation programs for returning refugees and for displaced people in Ethiopia), the socially disadvantaged groups (consumption assistance program in Ethiopia). Other actions focussing on particular population groups aim at recycling the former soldiers (e.g. in Ethiopia), at giving job opportunities to the nomads (e.g. in Ethiopia and Mali), at recycling the laid-off civil servants and promoting local communities (e.g. social rehabilitation and development funds which exist in all countries). In the CFAF Zone, a series of actions was implemented to compensate the adverse effect of the devaluation on the price of school books and medical drugs, and on employment. All these actions are usually undertaken with the help of the NGO network, more able to reach those who should benefit. It is particularly strong in the Sahelian countries and in Ethiopia, and begins to emerge in Cameroon.

Actions designed specifically for the women may also be considered in this context, especially those related to adult education and the access to micro-credit. The case of women heads of family is particular since they do not appear to be systematically among the poorest, for instance in Senegal and in Cameroon. However, the distribution of consumption appears to be much more unequal among female heads than in the average families. This suggests that other factors such as the marital status (e.g. polygamous vs. monogamous), the education of the girls, the number of boys and girls, etc., may have an influence and should be considered for targeting.

But the key issues related primary school enrollment, the promotion of women education, access to land and credit, change in the legal framework, information, etc., have to be addressed through long term sector policies such as those focusing on the development of human capital, the access to productive assets and the creation of income-generating activities.

2.3. Long-term Strategies

Long-term strategies result from the combination of an appropriate macro-economic framework, aiming at balanced growth, with sector-oriented policies which tackle specific poverty-related issues. A synergy has to be created through the various policies and programs implemented, and a series of focussed projects. Opposing specific actions vs. global policies, monetary poverty vs. human poverty, structural vs. conjunctural poverty, will bring no solution since all these concepts are useful in diverse circumstances and, consequently, complement each other in the overall design and implementation of a poverty reduction strategy.

Increasing the country global wealth remains the overarching objective. Without growth, it is difficult to reduce poverty. Through growth, the value added generated can be used to reduce both chronic and new poverty, either by providing employment to the poor or by redistributing income through targeted safety nets. This implies the continuation of the current economic reforms aiming at improving the civil service, the public enterprises efficiency and the agricultural production chains productivity. But, it also requires appropriate investment in the sectors which are the most able to create both added value and employment, i.e. agriculture (coffee, cocoa, cotton, sesame, palm or peanuts oil, bananas, etc.), the micro and small enterprises, the manufacturing and exports industries (e.g. agro-industries, wood transformation, flowers).

However, the amounts of the external debt, which lead to heavy debt services, decrease the countries capacity to finance investment and, therefore, to generate employment. The debt burden differs from one country to the other. Ethiopia has to reimburse the military equipment bought during the civil war, while Cameroon has to pay regular reimbursements which divert nearly half of the government monthly fiscal revenue. A reduction in the debt amount, once decided by the donor community would give greater degrees of freedom for the governments to design and implement new development strategies.

A few key issues, which have a serious impact on this design, need to be addressed through appropriate policies. They concern the development of human capital, the access to productive assets, and the creation of employment in the urban areas.

Human Capital Development

The difference between the HDI ranking and the per capita GDP ranking (in purchasing power parity) partly expresses the lack in human capital for a certain level of national income. It varies from one country to the other (see Table 1), according to the duration and impact of the economic crisis. For instance, school enrollment decreases between 1989 and 1992 in Ethiopia and between 1989 and 1995 in Cameroon.

However, similarities exist in the education and health requirements of each country. Investment was more oriented towards the construction of expensive hospitals, universities and higher schools increasing the maintenance costs in the public budget. The economic crisis reduced the level of public expenditures available for financing this domain and the devaluation of the Birr and the CFAF increased the cost of the medical drugs and education materials. Therefore, a larger part of the expenses related to education (i.e. school repair, teachers salaries supplement, school equipment, books, etc.) and health (i.e. medical drugs, salaries supplement) is now financed by the households themselves, either in an official way, or often on an informal basis. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to estimate the effective per capita amount presently spent for health and education matters.

For education, the focus is being shift towards primary education which has higher returns, with a special attention for girls enrolment. This implies to improve the quality of the primary education. The focus is also put on technical and professional school in the secondary to facilitate the integration of the newcomers in the labor market. It has to be done with the objective of correcting unbalances between regions and gender. This raise the issue of the funding of these policies. Several solutions were implemented: the design of "core social expenditure programs" which secure a minimum amount in the public budget for spending in the social sectors, cost recovery which makes the households pay for some specific expenses of their children, and the participation of local communities for the rehabilitation and maintenance of schools.

For health, the focus is put on primary and preventive care, with a switch towards the distribution of essential drugs instead of brand drugs. This implies a greater autonomy for the local health centers in order to implement cost recovery policies.

Developing the human capital of the poorest segments of the population is also a way of reducing inequality. The implementation of targeted actions for the nutrition of the children and the enrollment of the young girls in school are precise examples. However, this implies, first, public expenditures to be reallocated to combine the need of the poorest and the request for qualified technicians at the national level. For instance, in Ethiopia, military expenses were shifted towards the social sectors leading to improvement in the public spending for education (from 11.9% of the 1990 budget to 15.9% of the 1995 budget) and for health (from 3.5% to 5.8%).

Generally, the reallocation of public expenditures towards the primary level and inputs, such as essential drugs and textbook, has to be done at the detriment of the personnel salaries. This generates serious debates on the need for poles of excellence, either in health (through hospitals and medical research centers) or in education (with higher schools and universities) to use the qualified human capital and build efficient and modern countries.

The measurement of human capital returns is presently subject to caution and remains a key issue. Little of what is effectively spent on education and health is taking into account in the current evaluation of the rates of return. Households often complement, through cost recovery and a series of informal practices (that should be considered as corruption), the official budget spending, thus increasing the amount effectively spent. This information is not always included at its real level in the assessment of the total amount spent.

Access to Productive Assets for the Poor

The unequal distribution of assets among the socio-economic groups and the regions is a cause of poverty. Landless farmers and smallholders in rural areas, the self-employed and the cottage industries in the urban areas encounter difficulties to get access to productive assets to improve their productivity and, consequently, rise their revenue. This is the combined result of a lack of information, education and training, and financial means. The issue, therefore, is to find a way of providing to these people the means they are looking for to increase their assets.

In the meantime, social innovation mushroomed at the beginning of 90s as a answer to the economic crisis. Specific technologies were appropriated and transformed by local groups or social categories (e.g. trade and food transformation activities), new social networks were created (e.g. local NGOs, district groups, village cooperatives), and the current practices were adjusted to the households situation (e.g. new mechanisms in the tontines, role of funerals).

The reason is that the households, facing first the economic crisis, then the structural adjustment process, developed tremendous capabilities to adapt and to innovate in a difficult environment. Survival strategies occurred concerning the food habits (e.g. increase in cassava consumption, decrease in the purchase of meat, reduction in the number of daily meals), the consumption habits (e.g. switch to lower quality product like plastic shoes and second hand clothes, change in the means of transport), the family dynamics (e.g. reduction in the household size and increased responsibility towards the children, change in the respective role of men and women, loosening of family links) and the labor market (e.g. change in the education patterns, predominance of individual initiatives, multiple activities and sources of income, women's involvement in productive activities). More generally, a change in the mind of the people and in the vision of their role in the present society appeared.

This generated the emergence of individual initiatives and social innovations as a way to overcome the economic crisis and to avoid, or escape from, poverty. In the urban and rural areas, various NGOs were created such as youth associations, school associations, rural cooperatives, credit organizations, etc. They aimed at solving, at the local level, the main issues of employment, improvement in the quality of products, access to credit, improvement in the level of education, diversifying production, etc.

In this context, ensuring that the poor have access to other assets than their labor force becomes a priority. It implies, besides the reinforcement of their human capital, to provide the facility of buying or borrowing physical capital. This includes access to land for the landless farmers through land distribution (e.g. in Ethiopia), to low-cost inputs for the smallholders through village cooperative (e.g. Cameroon and Mali), to micro-credit and small loans for those creating a small business (e.g. the women in the food trade sector). The priority objective remaining the increase in the productivity and the quality of the production. In the case of women, especially women heads of family, the access to appropriate technologies that loose their time constraint would have positive consequences on the education and health of their children.

These initiatives are often promoted with the help of local NGOs, once they are recognized as reliable partners for the local decision-making process and the overall design of a sector policies.

Employment Creation in Urban Areas

Policies aiming at creating jobs in the urban areas remain a priority to solve the poverty issue. Targeted projects such as labor intensive public works do not proved to be a long term solution. Unless they are coupled with the development of a network of small private enterprises able to answer to the tenders submitted for infrastructure building. The objective of capacity building through the development of a network of local enterprises is promoted in all countries through rehabilitation funds (e.g. Agetip in Senegal) and programs (e.g. road maintenance in Cameroon).

The promotion of manufacturing and agro-industries, which are mostly labor intensive, is an other way to solve the issue of unemployment. Exporting the production of complementary goods to the neighboring countries of each of the three trade zones: UEMOA, CEMAC, and COMESA, considered as a wider domestic market, would also be a feasible opportunity to prepare for further exports on a worldwide basis.

However, most of the people either unemployed, because of the economic crisis, or laid-off through the restructuring of the state-owned enterprises, were absorbed by the informal sector which developed strongly in urban areas at the beginning of the 90s. It appeared as the best answer to unemployment, through its various forms: self-employment, cottage industries, micro-enterprises, small industries, etc. In Cameroon, at the worst time in the crisis, i.e. between July 1993 and March 1994, the rate of unemployment decreased from 25% to 18%, despite a reduction in the administrative employment from 23% to 21% and in the formal private sector from 12.2% to 8.5%, because the informal sector generated 83% of the jobs available.

Even, if the jobs provided are low-paid jobs with low productivity, these activities present a lot of advantages, since they integrate in the labor market both the newcomers and the laid-off civil servants. They also match the domestic demand of the households with low purchase capacity, since the quality of their products is often too low to satisfy the standards of the foreign demand. In that way, they contribute to the alleviation of poverty by satisfying part of the basic needs (food, clothing, housing, etc.). In the meantime, they are a key place for social innovations in the productive and service sectors. At the macroeconomic level, they generate a high per capita GDP in terms of purchasing power parity, even if it appears low in real terms (e.g. in Bangladesh, the real per capita GDP is $240 while the ppp per capita GDP is $1,200).

The issue is to find the means to develop this sector in order to generate small formal enterprises, from the existing self-employed and informal micro-enterprises. Presently, due to the constraints of the fiscal legislation and the social redistribution obligations, it is easier to create several micro-enterprises in the informal sector than to develop its own micro-enterprise into a small or medium size formal enterprise. This lead to a "missing middle", i.e. a lack of medium size enterprises, the current fiscal legislation being too heavy for this type of enterprise.

Therefore, fiscal policies need to be reviewed and should focus on the development of this sector. In a first phase, they would have to stimulate its capacity to generate employment, then in a second phase, incite an improvement in productivity in order to slowly integrate the formal sector. This implies the design of specific actions to coach those already working in this sector and to give them an easier access to their own productive assets through credit opportunities. In the meantime, incentives measures could enhance the creation of new businesses, direct new initiatives and provide information on the market opportunities to help them switch, later on, through duration and experience, from micro-enterprises or self-employment to the small and medium industries.

3. Major Issues and Obstacles Encountered

The major obstacles for the implementation of efficient macroeconomic policies aiming at reducing poverty, can be put together under four main headlines: the need of reliable information systems, a new role for the state, the population increase and the rise in inequality, and the emergence of the civil society

3.1. Measurement Issues and Information Systems

As seen before, information on poverty and inequality is quite scarce. This makes difficult any in-depth analysis of the evolution of these two phenomena over the period 1960-95. Moreover the differences between the methodologies used (e.g. definition of the poverty lines, type of survey) make comparisons difficult between the countries for both monetary and human poverty.

Few household expenditure surveys were conducted, half of them having only a local focus and not a national basis. These include, for instance, surveys in Cameroon in 1964-65, 1983-84 (national), 1993 and 1996 (national), in Ethiopia in 1989, 1992 and 1994, in Mali in 1985-86, 1988-89 (national), in Senegal in 1973 and 1992-93 (national). Unfortunately, part of these data were not produced with the objective of analyzing the distribution of poverty and inequality. Therefore, few linkages can be made between poverty and agriculture production in the rural areas, and between poverty and employment in the urban areas (exceptions are the 1-2-3 survey in Cameroon 1993, the Mali 1988-89 survey).

There is a now a need for monitoring tools able to focus on specific social categories, in order to measure the changes in their standards of living over a certain period. This requires the implementation of periodic panel surveys such as the one conducted in Ethiopia in 1989 and 1994. This could be done either through the setting up of permanent observatories like in Cameroon over the period 1991-96, or through the use of rapid surveys such as the social and economic survey of Mali in 1994, the Senegal priority survey in 1991-92, and even the Cameroon 1996 household survey ECAM.

Since national operations for the collection of households data are quite expensive, it would be difficult to conduct such operations regularly. However, it may be possible through observatories and rapid panel survey to generate, as a patchwork, a series of specific information which, once integrated in a national information strategy, would help to recompose the overall situation and make the main poverty and inequality issues emerge.

3.2. Political Issues and the Role of the State

The role of the state has evolved. It has still a key role to play, but the content of its role differs from the one of the 60s and the 70s. Instead of leading the productive and commercial sectors which can be nowadays better managed by the private sector, it has to focus on a few "regalia" functions such as the financial balances, infrastructures, justice and social policy, external affairs and defense, where an elected power able to make arbitrage between various interest groups is still required. Therefore, it will ensure that human security (justice, defense, food) and the market rules are respected, that investment is provided for the basic infrastructures and human capital (health, education, food security). The 90s could the turning decade towards this direction.

In the mean time, regional decentralization is also expected by the population. It could be done for political reasons in order to respect the right of the minorities in Cameroon, with the English speaking people of the West, in Mali to solve the Tamasheq issue, in Senegal to reach a peace agreement in Casamance, and in Ethiopia to build the democratic federal republic. It is also a way of making pro-poor policies more efficient by boosting local initiatives that will set-up safety nets and protection against insecurity for the poorest people and encourage the participation of local groups to the decision making process (e.g. the municipalities in Cameroon, the NGOs in Senegal and Mali, the nationalities in Ethiopia and regions in Mali). However, this decentralization has to be innovative in terms of economic decisions, allocation of funds and capacity building to avoid drawbacks and, even at the local level, the return to old authoritative habits resulting from years of state of centralization and controlled development.

The local NGOs, i.e. peasant cooperatives, urban district associations, parents' associations, financial tontines, etc., have a key role to play within this framework. They remain one of the best expression of the civil society and can adapt easily to any new economic and social situation. This flexibility make them at the front line to solve the social issues which emerge during the development process and are related to the reduction of poverty and inequality.

More generally, the change in the institutional framework appears to be a long-term solution for the promotion of a sustainable development in social and political terms. However, it should take its foundations in the various cultural backgrounds, i.e. the values of the people concerned by the development. This encourages the reinforcement of the democratic process as a ways of expressing and combining these cultural backgrounds.

3.3. Population Issues and the Rise in Inequality

Population issues and inequality are related when the increase in the GDP is mostly absorbs by the population increase, laving less opportunity for redistribution towards particular socio-economic groups. Presently, the fertility rates decrease in Senegal, Cameroon. In Mali, the same situation tends to appear, leaving possibility for a decrease in the population growth rate in the future. In Ethiopia, studies show the need to decrease the population growth rate, and actions are being taken (through education, family planning programs and an increase in the income) to reduce the fertility rate from7.7 children per women to 4 in 2015. Even if some countries are under-populated in terms of population per square kilometers (e.g. Cameroon, Ethiopia), in the long-term the population growth should not exceed the GDP growth to bring sustainable development.

The issue of inequality, and probably of increasing inequalities, need to be tackled in parallel with the issue of poverty since the social categories are differently affected by the economic crisis, the adjustment process and the renewal of growth. In Cameroon, the decrease of rural consumption was only 21% (due to the diversification of households activities) while it was around 50% in urban areas. Moreover, it was 43% for the 20% poorest households and only 17% for the highest quintile. It may be also possible that inequality tends to decrease during the depression period of time (e.g. Cameroon data from 1993 and 1996 surveys) and increase during the period of growth (e.g. Cameroon data from 1983-84 survey), but this is not confirmed by the data from Ethiopia and requires more research.

Recent studies show that inequality is not a necessity for growth and, moreover, inequality tends to reduce the rate of growth and jeopardized the social cohesion. This means that intervention is required to readjust the overall income distribution and reduce the disparities between regions, men and women, and among socio-economic groups. This could be done through differentials in incentives (i.e. fiscal policies and subsidies) and through the reallocation of resources (e.g. investment in infrastructures, personnel assignment, institutional development). Therefore, a policy aiming at decreasing inequality will have two combine several type of actions : a fiscal policy that favors the pro-poor activities and generate employment in those sectors, a decentralized allocation of social spending in the various regions, focussed actions towards specific groups, etc.

In statistical terms, it requires to measure, at the macro-level, the elasticity between poverty and growth, and at the micro-level, the changes that affect the households poverty situation. For instance, a panel survey carried out between 1989 and 1994 in Ethiopia, shows that in rural areas, 12% of the household fall into poverty, while 27% escape from poverty, the 61% others remaining in the same situation

3.4. Sociological Issues and the Civil Society

Two facts give importance to the sociological context of these countries. First, they are constituted of a variety of ethnic groups, each of which having its own cultural background and it own perception of life. Therefore the people's expectations as well as their priorities often vary from one group to the other and explain the differences in their reactions, when faced to serious macro-economic measures that affect the revenue and the social distribution of this revenue. Second, in most cases, the social pressure coming from the village, the community or the extended family, with its related obligations, have an influence on the income-generating decisions of the individuals. This is the case, for instance, for the job search and the creation of activities, often in the informal sector, which aims at improving the family revenue and satisfying the obligation of social redistribution. It also has an effect on the innovative process and the way micro-enterprise could develop and shift from the informal to the formal sector.

At the beginning of the economic crisis, in the 80s, community links strengthened, through the traditional redistribution process, as a way of protection from the adverse effects. A few years, with the deepening of the crisis, these links have loosen. But, most people still considered that they had a "social debt" towards their own community. This made social relations more difficult. With the renewal of growth in 1995, their first priority was to reimburse this debt, through gifts, participation to funerals and children education, thus delaying investment in the productive sectors (e.g. the cocoa and coffee production chains in Cameroon).

This shows that, on a theoretical basis, the knowledge of this context remains insufficient concerning the obligations and constraints faced by the households. Obligations that could either reduce, or on the contrary, boost the impact of the macro-economic measures implemented in the framework of the adjustment process. On the practical side, the emergence of better organized civil societies, through the democratization process and the development of local NGOs networks appears to be the best solution to match the sociological backgrounds with the economic objectives of development.

This means that the emerging institutions which compose the present civil society, would have to be associated, in a way or an other (through technical teams, an appropriate decision-making process, evaluation operations, debates and political meetings, etc.) to the design and monitoring of projects, programs, and sector policies aiming at reducing poverty and promoting the long-term sustainable growth.

Conclusion

A series of lessons can be learned from the comparison of Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mali and Senegal.

First, to reduce poverty in the long term, all types of interventions (i.e. macro and sector policies, targeted programs and projects) should be integrated in a global framework that create synergy and, therefore, is able to tackle all forms of poverty (i.e. structural and conjunctural, human and monetary, etc).

Second, balanced growth is a prerequisite for any poverty reduction strategy that wants to be sustainable in the long term. With growth, it is possible to create new opportunities for the poor and make them participate in the process of value added production. Without growth, only redistribution of the existing value added would reduce poverty. And this would exacerbate social and internal conflicts. Growth should also be balanced in order to be viable in the long-term, since the eradication of the structural poverty requires a long-term process.

Third, if the eradication of poverty in the long term remains the overarching objective, reducing all forms of inequality in the short term is a second order priority. It concerns inequality between regions, men and women, socio-economic groups, etc., but also includes the monitoring of particularly vulnerable population groups, for instance, the women heads of families, the self-employed in petty activities, the landless peasants, etc. This is part of the social sustainability of the development strategy.

Fourth, social innovation on one side, and individual initiatives on the other, are the two key factors of success for this strategy. Therefore, they should be promoted by an appropriate legal framework (e.g. investment and trade code, fiscal policy, justice) and taken into account in the design of sector policies. Social innovations generate new types of relations between the people, through the creation of institutions or management processes. They contribute to the introduction of values such as accountability and transparency thus reinforcing the social cohesion and the democratic process. The are the best way, since the most creative, to fight against extreme poverty which generates exclusion from the productive part of the society. Individual initiatives are also able to generate innovative processes and to create new enterprises therefore improving the level of employment.

The paper presented, as a synthesis of the experience of Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mali and Senegal, a few elements that should be taken into account in the design of appropriate development strategies that would combine growth with the reduction of both chronic and conjunctural poverty. Since the specificity of each country differs, the use of various types of practices for each of the policies or actions implemented is justified (like for instance, the use of the urban Kebeles for the food distribution in Ethiopia) within this global framework. The emergence of a series of positive indices during the 90s, such as the renewal of growth, the democratization process, the improvement in gouvernance, the social indicators, etc., shows that, despite the current internal difficulties, encouraging results are appearing in the four countries. This requires, therefore, a continuous focus in the same direction.

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