

Good News for the Poor and Health to Planet Earth

"The only way to fight poverty effectively is to make the poor person an efficient producer."

- Fr. Nzamujo OP

Africa is becoming the focus for concern among the richer nations and concerned world citizens. 'Why', you may ask. For many African States Independence came with high hopes as the 'winds of change' began to blow through the continent nearly half a century ago. But while other parts of the developing world have seen rapid economic growth, Africa is the only continent to become poorer in the last 25 years. By the year 2000 half the world's poor were in Africa compared with 10% in 1970.



GATT WINNERS AND LOSERS

(projected net annual losses or gains)

REGION/COUNTRY	LOSSES/GAINS
EUROPEAN COMMUNITY	US \$ + 80.7 billion
CHINA	US \$ + 37 billion
USA	US \$ + 18.8 billion
EAST EUROPE/EX URSS	US \$ + 2.2 billion
GULF/MEXICO	US \$ + 1.5 billion
AFRICA	US \$ - 2.6 billion

There is a lot of poverty in Africa but Africa is not a poor continent. It is endowed with human beings, sunshine, oil, precious stones, forests, water, wildlife, soil, land and agricultural products.

Just look at the mediocre results and advanced state of poverty and dysfunctional state of affairs in practically every aspect of socio-economic life in spite of:

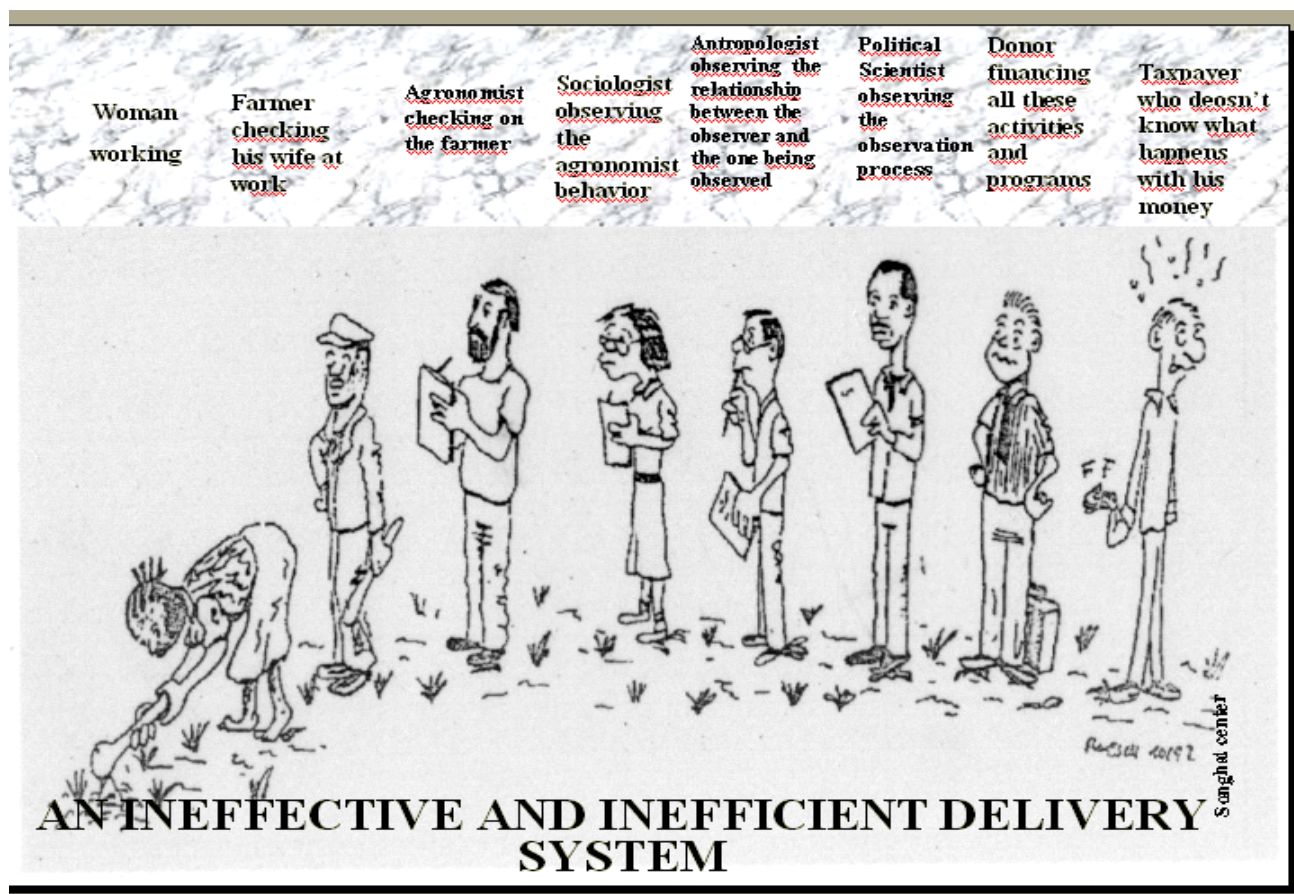
So what is the Problem?

- the rich indigenous knowledge base and practices inherited from its forefathers
- the quantity of technology and knowledge generated by universities, research institutions and the enormous amount of financial resources injected into the development arena over the past 50 years
- the enormous natural resources and climatic conditions highly favourable to agricultural production.

What is really troubling is the attitude of 'business as usual' of those responsible for the development of Africa. This shows that Africans and their partners have not really come to comprehend either the gravity of the situation or the forces to be unleashed to combat these problems. A new roadmap is needed, but Africans need to understand that an authentic development initiative showing a new roadmap would require a lot of effort. *This new direction will require new and different ways of thinking and organizing agricultural and other economic activities.*

Looking at Nigeria in this context: the thrust of government policy is to enable the poor and more vulnerable sections of society to achieve sustainable livelihoods. The plan is to economically empower communities, families, and individuals through a sustained, well coordinated, and comprehensive programme of poverty alleviation. But it is facing a fierce uphill struggle to realize it's dream because it would seem that the 120 million+ people have not yet grown into a National identity.

They still look towards their disparate tribal groups for survival.



As a result, the Nation lacks cohesive power and so the country is incapable of internally generating the forces necessary to continually face and meet its needs and desires. It has run into what is called, 'the logic of poverty' and underdevelopment.

In Adamawa State where the Sisters of Mercy work there is a population of over 3 million with mostly subsistent farmers and a growing population of youth, who more and more drift to the urban areas in search of employment and a better life. In Yola, the capital, there are little or no industries and the biggest employer is the Civil Service, both Federal and

*Incarnating
our Prophetic
call*



State. Delayed and non-payment of workers is a serious dilemma. We, the Sisters of Mercy, meet every day with people who are hungry, lack adequate shelter, basic education and medicines. ***We have come to own as our Mercy prophetic role the need to offer an alternative way of thinking and acting;*** to develop strategies and environments that engender entrepreneurial capacities – knowledge, skills and value systems like... honesty, discipline, and good work ethics, thus putting the poor person and poor communities in the driver's seat. This requires a mega development in cultural practice.



The Sisters of Mercy are developing ***Sabon Rayuwa Centre for Cosmology, Ecology and Culture***, an initiative grounded in a theology of right relationships with God, self, others and the Cosmos. It is a compassionate response to our impoverished planet earth and her people who cry for mercy. The enterprise is to create the conditions for improving the lives of others, the great majority of whom live in rural areas. This is done in an environment where appropriate and positive human, cultural and cosmological values are regarded as essential elements. Young African men and women are trained to develop their initiative and creativity, ready and able to meet the socio-economic challenges of the future. In the process they are encouraged to develop a strong desire for change and a better life. Individuals are taught to be alert, active, responsible, creative, sensitive to the needs of others, ready to sacrifice their self-interest in favour of their communities and the common good on a healthy planet earth.



Sabon Rayuwa is a place where:

- .Earth Ways and Earth wisdom are lived and celebrated
- The Earth story is learned and studied as a source of inspiration and motivation for all being and acting.
- Guidance and help in discerning one's way of life within the context of the whole planet is offered.



- Food is sacred and special attention is given to the choices we make in the light of eco-justice.
- There is a special focus on helping people to remain living in their own villages, with adequate income in harmony and interconnectedness with the total community of life.
- People can be most truly themselves, sharing brokenness, feeling loved unconditionally, supported and challenged to be all one can be.
- There is the hospitality of an open door for all who wish to learn to live with respect and reverence before all of life.

Our Beliefs:

We affirm that;

- The Universe reveals the Divine and that all of life is sacred and sacramental.
 - Earth's resources are finite and no species has the right to endanger future generations by claiming these resources as their own.
 - Bio-diversity underpins the processes that make life possible.
 - Bio-regionalism honours the biblical call to love, respect, and carefully listen to every being, every life-form, every manifestation of the creative spirit of God
- It is an ecological expression of life in the Body of Christ.



- A preferential option for the poor and the poor earth is the Great Work of our time. We resist all forces, policies and institutions which create and perpetuate poverty or accept it as inevitable and ineradicable.



It is the poor who suffer most from any environmental crisis because it is their land which is stripped, their towns turned into toxic dumps, their water which cannot be cleansed of poisonous chemicals, their jobs are affected and their subsistence from the land threatened.

○ We are called to embrace 'the breadth of our human story, particularly it's rootedness in Africa, the incarnational significance of that unfolding and the justice response it calls forth in our time as the people of Africa call out for meaning and hope' ("Evolutionary Faith" D. O Murchu)

Our Principles are:

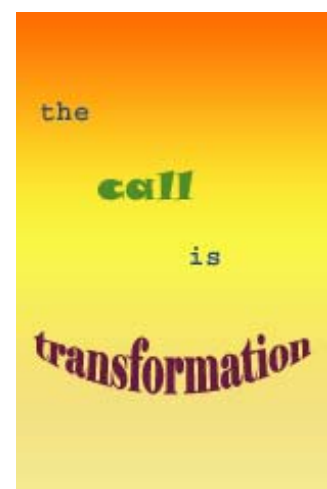
- **COMMUNION**
Everything is related to everything else



- **DIFFERENTIATION** Nothing that is created is repetitive or the same as something else



- **INTERIORITY** ... Each expression of creation has a personality that is uniquely its own

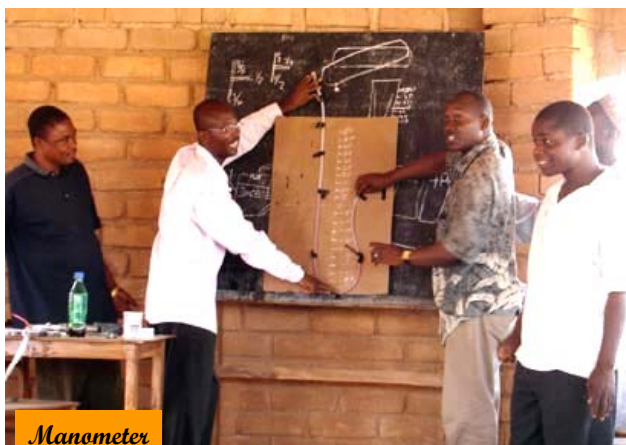


"The only way to fight poverty effectively is to make the poor person an active producer."

Sabon Rayuwa Setting honours and celebrates the Bio-Region:

A house and Learning Centre

- built with compressed earth blocks
- Furnished and decorated with local materials and materials saved from being wasted
- Where renewable energy is the norm



Manometer



A garden

- to grow vegetables and food organically
- where indigenous trees, plants, herbs, (including endangered species) are grown



Reduce/Re-use /Re-cycle System



- Water is saved from being wasted by using 'grey' water for the garden
- Rain water is collected by roof catchment and reservoir
- Compost toilets feed a bio-gas system
- Food, paper, grass etc are composted or recycled



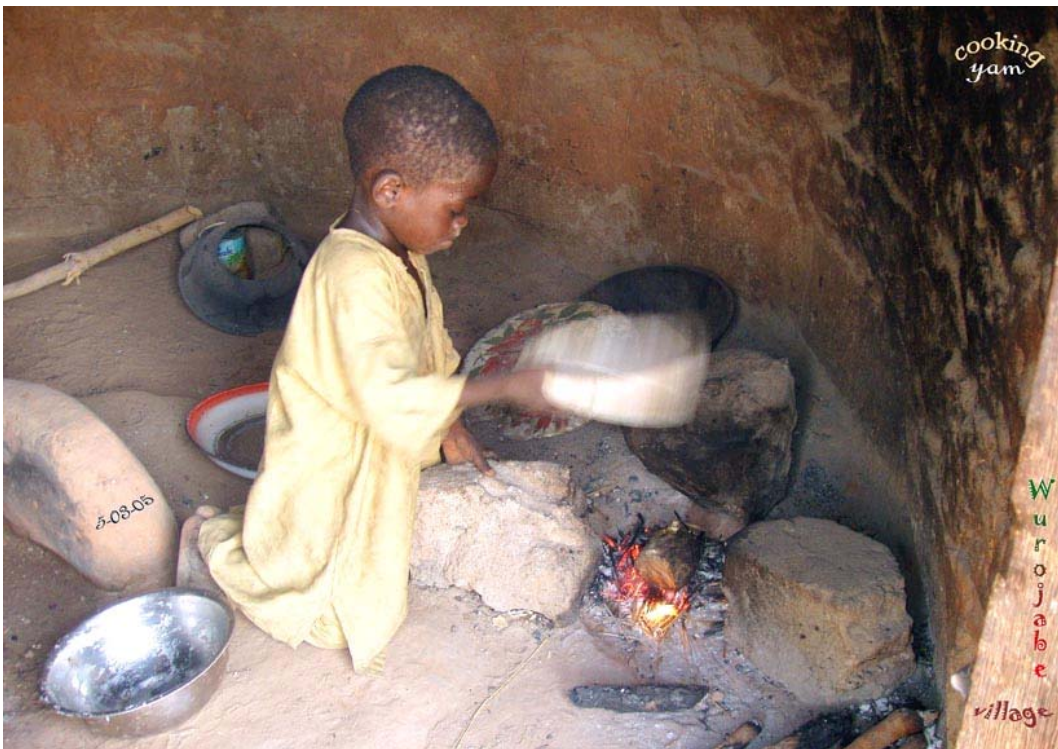
A Poustinia which offers:

- a 'creation space' for reconciliation, healing and wholeness
- a 'gathering space' for sharing the Sabon Rayuwa dream
- a 'sacred space' for reflection and celebration



Connecting the cry of people who are poor to the cry of the Earth

The most threatened of Earth's creature's today are poor people. The logic that exploits classes and subjects peoples to the interest of a few rich and powerful countries is the same as the logic that devastates the earth and plunders its wealth showing no solidarity with the rest of humankind and future generations.. Such a logic is shattering the fragile balance of the Universe built up with great wisdom by nature throughout fifteen billion years of labour.



Poverty
is
both cause
and effect
of
environmental
degradation

"The poor are often forced to further degrade the natural environment in order to survive"

"In a sustainable society money cannot be the bottom line for all decisions; the bottom line must be LIFE"

(Breakthrough News Pg 4. Dec.'99)



A MESSAGE FROM FUTURE GENERATIONS



" you are alive at a pivotal moment in humanity's development. You are making some of the most important choices in human history. Your era is marked by positive and negative potentials of such newness and magnitude that you can hardly understand them. We strongly care about your choices, of course, since we benefit or suffer from them quite directly. We live downstream from you in time; whatever you put into the stream flows on to our era"

(Breakthrough News, May-Aug '99)