The Field of Development: Background and Issues

The purpose of this and the following chapter is to present local-level development as a field of international social work. This chapter provides a brief introduction to the overall development field. It is a vast and complex field to which many text and other books, along with a wide range of journals and reports, are devoted. And while it is true that social workers are and should be involved across the whole spectrum of development work, given our focus on developing countries in this text we have elected to concentrate on but one aspect of this broad field, namely local-level development (grassroots level community development), for several reasons. First, the majority of social workers in developing countries working in the development field are focused on local-level development. Second, this is the level at which social work expertise most clearly applies, which is not to deny social work’s relevance at other levels. Third, the local level is the one most likely to be neglected both in the key texts on development and by many of those in the field responsible for development work—especially those local levels where poverty is concentrated and marginalized populations are to be found. It is, therefore, appropriate for all of these reasons that we focus our discussion at the local level.

We have elected to introduce development in this chapter by presenting the various paths to achieving development, dividing these basically into three categories, namely: imposed development, where agents external to the state play the dominant role; state-controlled development, where development is a state-initiated and directed process, often described as a top-down approach that focuses on macroeconomic and political policy, but with assumed implications at the micro level; and externally assisted development, or the tendency for development in many contexts to be dependent on external aid and investment.

Imposed development, as an ongoing process, is perhaps not all that relevant today, although there remain many who believe that western countries control the development process to their own advantage (e.g., Monbiot, 2003; Hoogvelt, 2001; Korten, 1995). Certainly western countries do wield considerable power, given the nature of trade, investment, and aid patterns and institutional structures. However,
the relevance of imposed development lies also in the legacy of colonial history, as is discussed later. Externally assisted development has constituted a significant aspect of development since the end of World War II and continues to do so. Most states, however, also play a crucial role in their country’s development, despite their colonial or other heritage and the importance to them of external aid; and many international agencies are involved in assisting states to strengthen their development roles.

Following our brief overview of the nature of, and current issues associated with, these three categories of paths, we discuss local-level development. This is presented partly as an alternative to the above approaches but, more importantly, as an essential complementary approach that is all too often devalued. The following chapter then presents some of the key programs and strategies through which local-level development is pursued.

Global Development Since 1945: The Various Paths to Development

In his excellent history of the “short twentieth century 1914–1991,” Eric Hobsbaum (1995) outlines the extent and range of changes that occurred around the world in the 1914–1991 period. At the end of the Second World War, large numbers of peoples lived under colonial control in largely rural agrarian countries, where the norm was subsistent living in extended family groups having little contact with the world beyond. By the end of the century, all this had changed. The great majority of those subject to colonial rule had secured independence, and the changing fortunes of the greatly increased number of states impacted significantly on the lives of the majority of people. Hobsbaum’s “golden years” of 1950–1973 (1995, chap. 9), with its massive economic growth and rapidly expanding globalization, while essentially belonging to the developed capitalist countries, was in other ways a worldwide phenomenon affecting in various ways almost the entire global population. Much of the developing world, sometimes gradually and sometimes not so gradually, was becoming more industrialized, more urbanized, more populated by individuals and nuclear families rather than extended families, more consumption-oriented, more engaged in various forms of migration, and more connected to global communication, economic, cultural, technological, and other systems. Its classes of well-educated or middle-class people, whose numbers were, in many countries, growing rapidly, and its large youth populations were certainly increasingly a part of the global village, and the many others...
who did not feel themselves to be a part of that world, and who were certainly not sharing in its affluence, were nevertheless being drawn into its webs, for good or bad. On the positive side, for example, health and education levels rose, often dramatically, while on the negative side many peoples became increasingly subject to the vagaries of the global market place and financial crises, and to the growing wave of political instability and conflict, and to poor governance.

Many of the massive and widespread changes that hit the developing countries were due to their colonial past; others were the repercussions of changes occurring in the industrialized developed world; others again, however, were the outcome of a concerted effort to develop on the part of many developing states, and a major drive to facilitate that development by the developed industrialized countries. Beginning with the American Marshall Plan to reconstruct Europe and the U.S. efforts to build a strong Japanese economy, along with the establishment of the international economic agencies of the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), the development enterprise grew exponentially in the decades after World War II. Large sums of money were channeled into development through the international economic agencies, the various agencies of the UN such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Food Programme (WFP), the international aid programs of virtually all western countries, and the rapidly expanding number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in development work. As Todaro (1997, p. 547) puts it: “The money volume of official development assistance (ODA), which includes bilateral grants, loans, and technical assistance as well as multilateral flows, has grown from an annual rate of $4.6 billion in 1960 to $58 billion in 1992.”

By 1999, however, the annual rate had fallen slightly to $56 billion; while in terms of developed countries’ GNP, the percentage allocated to ODA had declined steadily from 0.51 percent in 1960 to 0.29 percent in 1999 (Todaro and Smith, 2003, p. 648). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported in 2005 that, in 2003, a total of $69 billion had been provided in ODA, and that only five (all European) countries met the 0.7 percent of gross national product (GNP) target set by the UN. This flow of ODA is in itself a highly controversial topic. (See Goulet, 1995, on the ethics of development.) Concerns are frequently expressed regarding, for example, the proportion provided in loans with debt burden consequences (see George, 1988), the strings attached to much ODA, the use of ODA to influence developing countries’ political and economic decisions, including the highly controversial structural adjustment programs of the IMF, the amounts of ODA diverted from their goal by corruption, and the dependency burden that can flow from ODA. ODA also has much to do with resulting inequalities (Seabrook, 1993; Thompson, 2003). Todaro (1997, pp. 551–54) and Todaro and Smith (2003, pp. 648–60) provide a useful discussion on why donor countries provide aid and less developed countries accept it. (On ODA, see also Randel and German, 1997, pp. 247–57.)

Development aid, post–World War II, gave rise to what some refer to as the development industry. The UN, national governments, and others embarked on a massive program of development aid of various kinds; a large literature was produced on the topic; and events gave rise to what Todaro (1997, p. 7) calls development economics. Arguing that development economics is not the same as the economics of either advanced capitalist nations or centralized socialist countries, he writes,

It [development economics] is nothing more or less than the economics of contemporary poor, underdeveloped, Third World nations with varying ideological orientations, diverse cultural backgrounds, and very complex yet similar economic problems that usually demand new ideas and novel approaches.
Todaro proceeds to analyze the meaning of development, the common characteristics of developing countries, and the nature of development economics, and we commend this analysis to social work students and practitioners. It is helpful at this point to reproduce Todaro’s (1997, p. 16) definition of development in full:

Development must therefore be conceived of as a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of poverty. Development, in its essence, must represent the whole gamut of change by which an entire social system, tuned to the diverse basic needs and desires of the individuals and social groups within that system, moves away from a condition of life widely perceived as unsatisfactory toward a situation or condition of life regarded as materially and spiritually better.

We should appreciate that Todaro has arrived at this definition after long involvement in studying and writing about development. Has the world achieved over the last 60 years the development implied in Todaro’s definition? His work, and that of many others, shows that there have been a variety of “paths to development” endorsed over the 50-odd years of post–World War II global development efforts. Easterly (2002), for example, identifies and analyzes a number of paths to development within what he considers to be an “elusive quest for growth.” His “paths,” however, are confined to economic theories of development. Other writers, like So (1990), present their discussion of “paths” in terms of the various schools of development thought.

We have developed our own typology of paths to development. It is not a comprehensive typology but rather one that enables social workers to become aware of certain trends and related issues in this field, and also to enable newcomers to this field to find their way around this complex and large literature and field of endeavor. We shall consider the selected paths because a general knowledge of each is highly advantageous to workers involved in development, and particularly local-level development. We are not implying that the paths discussed are inherently good or bad, right or wrong: rather that each, apart from imposed development, represents an important approach to development, often depending on whether that specific approach is complemented by other approaches adopted simultaneously or addressed in the past.

**Imposed Development**

Imposed development occurs where the course of development is controlled, or strongly influenced, by outside players. We shall consider briefly three forms of imposed development: that which occurred during the colonial period, that strongly influenced by neocolonialism—“the continuation of the colonial system in spite of formal recognition of political independence” (Hoogvelt, 2001, p. 30), and development imposed by the IMF’s Structural Adjustment Programs. (See Hoogvelt, 2001, for a comprehensive critical analysis of the history of the political economy of development.) However, we should recognize that the term has also been applied to even the provision of humanitarian aid (e.g., Harrell-Bond, 1986, whose work on emergency assistance to refugees is called *Imposing Aid*), implying that it can have relevance at the micro level.

**Development Under Colonialism**

The colonial period occurred between 1500 and, according to some analysts, 1973, with various phases identified during this period (So, 1990, pp. 208ff.). While colonialism and its impact are often discussed in generalities, as Randall and Theobald (1998, pp. 11ff.) point out, it was in fact an “enormously varied experience.” This variation, these authors suggest, was
due to three factors: the approach adopted by
the colonizing power, the nature of the preexist-
ing society, and the way in which colonial rule
the differences between the colonizing powers,
and this is obviously a very important factor in
recent developments in the former colonies,
especially in Africa, while the manner in which
colonial powers withdrew is frequently discussed
as often problematic.

There are several characteristics of colonial-
ism that should be noted (see Potter, 1992). One
important point is that the establishment and
maintenance of colonies usually involved active
aggression towards, and the subjugation of, the
inhabitants of the colonies (Hoogvelt, 2001). A
second important point is that the boundaries
and ethnic composition of many modern states
are a direct outcome of the colonial powers
engaging in territorial demarcation (Smith,
1983, p. 27). For example, in relation to what
occurred in sub-Saharan Africa, Stoetz et al.
(1999, pp. 44–45) write,

> The European scramble for Africa was codi-
fied into the configuration of nation states
that endures today. In 1884, delegates from
14 European nations met in a Conference
of Great Powers, and the following year
they signed the General Act of the Berlin Con-
ference, formalizing the partitioning of sub-
Saharan Africa. The Berlin Treaty chopped
Africa up into parcels according to the inter-
est of Europeans, completely disregarding
the ecological and social features that had
defined the continent for centuries.

A third important point is that the motivation
of the colonial powers was largely economic, and
they proceeded to exploit their colonies for their
own economic purposes. They exploited natural
resources in many cases, such as silver and
gold; and, after turning many nations into cash
crop–growing nations, producing products of
value to Europe and North America, they then
exploited those cash crops. So (1990, p. 112)
gives the example of India and the production
of cotton, while sugar, rubber, and bananas are
other examples involving a range of countries. A
fourth important point is that colonial adminis-
tration created administrative structures that
“were superimposed upon those of the sub-
ordinated populations” (Smith, 1983, p. 29). This
process commonly involved the use or creation
of an elite, often being a specific ethnic or racial
grouping and thus creating a new “ethclass” (an
ethnic group with class status), or it could
involve the recruitment of an existing “native
elite” (So, 1990, p. 114). In particularly the for-
mer case, this frequently resulted in significant
social divisions that were to come more and
more to the fore postindependence (Smith, 1983,
p. 59), a tragic example being Rwanda, but for
the colonial powers it served as a mechanism for
reinforcing their control (Smith, pp. 70–71). On
this point in relation to sub-Saharan Africa,
Stoetz et al. (1999, p. 45) write,

> Europeans instituted a colonial administra-
tion that was ruled by whites, but one in which
certain tribes were selected for mediation
with the African population. Consequently
few Africans were to acquire even a rudimen-
tary knowledge of how to govern a modern
nation-state. Compounding matters, colonial
preference for certain tribes over others aggra-
vated tribal jealousies.

By contrast, in colonial Malaya it was the
colonial preference for certain racial popu-
lations, and in Ireland for a certain religion,
that had similar consequences (Enloe, 1973).
Malaysia’s “bumiputra policy” of 1970, that
aimed at giving the native-born Malays 30 per-
cent of the overall equity pie by 1990, was an
attempt to reverse the trend established under
colonialism (see UNDP, 1996, p. 60).

Finally, we should note that colonialism was
also responsible for certain forms of social wel-
fare development (Midgley, 1995a, pp. 51ff.).
Midgley notes that “colonialism had long been
concerned with the exploitation of the natural
and agricultural resources of the colonies” (p. 52), but that “this situation began to change in the early decades of the twentieth century when some colonial administrations introduced development plans designed to foster economic growth.”

He goes on to discuss the example of Britain and its Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, which “fostered the idea that the colonies were... potentially viable economic entities in their own right.” With this new thinking, gradually the idea of linking “the expansion of the social services with the overriding need for economic development was generally accepted” (Midgley, p. 53). From an early stage in colonialism, however, an aspect of much colonial policy was its “civilizing mission.” MacPherson (1982, p. 45) quotes a British colonial policy statement:

There can be no room for doubt that it is the mission of Great Britain to work continuously for the training and education of the Africans towards a higher intellectual, moral and economic level than that which they had reached when the crown assumed responsibility for the administration of this territory.

MacPherson goes on to present two case studies, one the health services in Papua New Guinea and the other social services in Tanzania. He concludes that the overall legacy of colonialism was dependency and underdevelopment (p. 72), while specific areas of welfare development had many deficiencies that continued after independence. For example, health policies resulted in “curative bias, extreme maldistribution of services, extreme inequalities in access, and the dominance of Western medicine” (p. 62). As Midgley (1981, p. 52) explains: “Social welfare services, which were established in the colonies before independence, were based on practices in the metropolitan countries.” Furthermore, “the social services in developing countries evolved incrementally to deal not with absolute need but to meet the growing demand for health, education and housing, especially in the urban areas” (p. 53). Hence the colonial legacy in the welfare field was not one that would serve the former colonies well as they moved beyond independence.

**Neocolonialism Postindependence**

The end of the colonial period did not, for the most part, see the end of imposed development (see Hoogvelt, 2001). The phenomenon of neocolonialism often meant that the extent of external influence continued little changed. As Randall and Theobald (1998, p. 11) point out, “experience of colonial rule in Latin America, where most countries gained their independence by the 1830s, explains less about their subsequent development than does continuing American neoinperialism.” Imperialism (and neoinperialism), Hoogvelt writes “exists wherever there is deliberate transnational political interference, including military interference, for the purposes of the mobilization, extraction and external transfer of economic surplus from one political territory to another” (2001, p. 160.)

This lack of change can be partly understood on the basis of dependency theory (So, 1990, part II; Randall and Theobald, 1998, chap. 4; Todaro, 1997, pp. 82–84). As Randall and Theobald write,

It [dependency theory] holds that no society can be understood in isolation from this [international economic] order and in fact the condition of underdevelopment is precisely the result of the incorporation of Third World economies in the world capitalist system which is dominated by the developed North. (1998, p. 120)

In the case of Latin America, that domination was exercised largely by the United States. This neoinperialism, however, also comes about in part because of the behavior of Latin American elites, although similar situations occurred worldwide. As Randall and Theobald (1998, p. 15) put it,
In Latin America and elsewhere, elite groups are more oriented, economically and culturally, towards North America and Europe than towards their own countries. That is where they have their bank accounts, maintain business links, own homes and send their children to school.

In her discussion of “neo-colonial imperialism,” Enloe (1983, p. 55) quotes an African-American scholar:

A neo-colony is a colony that is no longer needed as such. In the African situation, this meant that the colonizer had completed his work of industrializing the territory. He had disrupted the indigenous way of life of its inhabitants, replacing traditional values with those of the West... All that remained was to establish the indigenous bourgeoisie, sympathetic to the Western culture which had created it, at the political helm, and the country would then be granted “independence.” The colonizers could then withdraw their forces back home. They sit comfortably in their living rooms, reaping economic gains from all over the world.

In practice, many scholars (e.g., Hoogvelt, 2001) seem to agree with this view that the end of colonialism represented a change largely in the forms of western control, aided by the growth in neocolonial linkages with certain classes within the former colonies. Most of the newly independent countries continued to exist under a large measure of western control or in a dependency relationship with the West, often resulting in limited or unbalanced development.

The World Bank’s and IMF’s Structural Adjustment Programs

Although many states are among the members of the international economic institutions, namely the World Bank, IMF, and WTO, these institutions are dominated to a large extent by western states, and particularly by the United States. It is not, therefore, surprising that many people view these institutions as agents of the West and thus of neocolonialism, imposing conditions on weaker countries even as they may distribute aid to them. Todaro (1997, pp. 526ff.) and Todaro and Smith (2003, pp. 613ff.) outline the history and purposes of the various structural adjustment and stabilization packages or programs developed by the WB and IMF. While in theory of benefit to the countries receiving the packages and to the broader world community, two aspects of these packages concern us here. One is that they are clearly imposed by the two organizations in question, for the price in rejecting them is virtually impossible to live with. The second aspect is that “they have been found to contribute to rising hardships amongst the poorest groups in developing countries” (Todaro, 1997, p. 530). (See also Stoesz et al., 1999, pp. 122–23; Simon, Spengen, Dixon, and Narman, 1995; Bello, Kinley, and Elinson, 1982; George and Sebelli, 1994; Hoogvelt, 2001; Todaro and Smith, 2003, pp. 613–15.) Moreover, they have often funded large projects, such as large dams, that have resulted in ecological degradation and the involuntary displacement of people without needed support. Not only, therefore, are they seen by many to be a crucial aspect of western dominance of the development process, especially during times of crisis, but they are also seen to impose hardship on the vulnerable for the benefit predominantly of outsiders to the country in question. (See Easterly, 2002, Chapter 6 for a critical analysis; and for some critical case studies, see Simon et al., 1995 on Africa; and Bello et al., 1982, on the Philippines.)

Imposed development has been presented as largely development imposed, in one sense or another and to varying degrees, by external powers. The three types are summarized in Table 5.1. Of course, there is also a degree of internally imposed development emanating from the most powerful sectors of a national population, but at least in most such cases people will eventually have a voice in their own
development. Such was not the case during the colonial period, and supporters of one form or another of dependency theory and of neocolonialism would argue that this situation has not essentially changed in modern times.

State-Devised Development Policies

To some degree this path to development contradicts the previous path of colonialism and dependency, but in practice not all countries were subjected to excessive external control; while in most other if not all cases, it was always going to be in the end a balance between the initiatives taken by those with responsibility for the development of their state and the influences exerted from outside. Ultimately successful development is dependent on a state accepting and exercising control of its own development, and, while colonialism prevented many states or future states from doing so for a period, it is doubtful that neocolonialism would constitute more than an additional, yet highly significant factor, that any state must take into account in an era of globalization (Hoogvelt, 2001, chap.10). If we accept this premise of state responsibility for development, this still leaves open the precise path to development to be taken by any state, and the variations over the past 50 years have resulted in considerable debate. We shall consider the policies most commonly adopted under four headings: macroeconomic policies, political policies, human resources development policies, and human

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imposed Development</th>
<th>Colonialism</th>
<th>Neocolonialism</th>
<th>The WB's and IMF's Structural Adjustment Packages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cold or active aggression, violence, and subjugation</td>
<td>American neocolonialism</td>
<td>Major agents of neocolonialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Territorial demarcation with colonizers’ self-interest</td>
<td>Domination by the developed north countries</td>
<td>Countries have little say in the package and cannot escape from it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exploitation of colonies’ human and natural resources for colonizers’ economic prosperity</td>
<td>Colony elites’ strong affiliation to colonized countries</td>
<td>Large-scale projects causing ecological damage and peoples’ displacement with little concern to their well-being</td>
</tr>
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<td>Administrative structures reinforced colonizers’ control and divisions in colonies</td>
<td>Replacement of colonies’ traditional values and practices with those of the west</td>
<td>Lead to hardships amongst the poorest groups</td>
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<td>Limited urban-centered social services to achieve the above three points</td>
<td>Ensuring economic gains for the west</td>
<td>Western dominance in the development process</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Dependency and underdevelopment</td>
<td>Continuation of western control in different forms</td>
<td>Benefit to outsiders</td>
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<td>Facilitate different degrees of instability in colonies when western control is threatened</td>
<td>Dependency and economic growth without distribution</td>
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</table>
development policies, although clearly the areas indicated are ideally complementary, despite the fact that often commentators emphasize one area over the others. The first three policy trends are commonly perceived as state-led and top-down approaches, and hence criticized for these reasons when excessive reliance is placed upon them; while the last one is commonly presented as an alternative, people-centered and bottom-up approach to development.

**Macroeconomic Development**

While macroeconomic policy in developing countries is very much influenced by global events and often significantly assisted (some would say distorted) by external aid, it is largely the prerogative and responsibility of state governments. The success of macroeconomic development in developing countries has, however, varied greatly, as a perusal of World Bank and UNDP reports at any point of time make clear. This has led to considerable attention being given to why some countries develop faster and further than do others. Much attention has focused on various factors perceived as relevant. Some studies stress a country’s location and natural resource endowment; others attribute significance to cultural factors; others again focus on a country’s relationship with other economic centers within the global economy; and in recent years much attention has been given to the nature of governance, especially its freedom from corruption and inefficiencies and the qualities of those who lead it. Clearly, each and all of these factors, and no doubt others, can be highly relevant in determining state economic levels achieved. (See Easterly, 2002, for a discussion of most of these factors.)

A second approach to understanding economic development has concentrated on the theoretical level, seeking for models that demonstrate what it is that drives economic development. Todaro (1997, chap. 3, or Todaro and Smith, 2003, chap. 4) provides a useful summary of this literature in his discussion of five theories of economic development, namely the linear-stages theory, structural-change models, the international-dependency revolution, the neoclassical counterrevolution, and the new growth theory. Let us outline briefly the essence of these theories.

The linear-stages approach builds on work by Rostow and the Harrod-Domar growth model. (See Todaro, 1997 and 2003, for explanations of this work.) The approach envisages five stages through which countries pass in their economic progress, with the key factor being prevailing levels of savings and investment.

The structural-change models accept that capital formation is important but emphasize also the establishment of a modern industrial sector.

The international-dependency revolution argues essentially that the underdevelopment of many countries is due to a highly inequitable and exploitative capitalist system favoring the rich and powerful states.

The neoclassical counterrevolution focuses on the importance to economic development of the neoliberal endorsement of supply-side economic policies, and policies such as the privatization of public corporations, encouragement of free markets and trade, and the minimization of government regulation of economic activities.

The latest theory, new growth theory, explains disparities in economic development by endorsing the neoclassical approach while focusing strongly on human capital formation and the promotion of knowledge-intensive industries.

Todaro’s own conclusion is that all five theories have some credence, and that there is no one path to economic development. He also endorses the emphasis on the purposes to which economic growth is put as being more important than the growth itself.
This last conclusion of Todaro’s is one on which it is important to dwell. Many writers, while fully acknowledging the importance of economic growth, focus mainly on what follows from that growth or what that growth is used for. An interesting national example here comes from the state of Bhutan where state policy emphasizes not Gross National Product but Gross National Happiness! Back in the 1980s, several prominent writers were stressing the importance of “growth with equity.” An excellent summary of such arguments is presented in the UNDP’s 1996 Human Development Report, which focuses on the relationship between economic growth and human development. It highlights the all too common phenomena of “jobless growth”; “ruthless growth”—where the fruits of growth mostly benefit the rich, leaving millions of people struggling in ever-deepening poverty”; “voiceless growth”—where growth in the economy has not been accompanied by an extension of democracy or empowerment”; “rootless growth”—which causes people’s cultural identity to wither”; and “futureless growth”—where the present generation squanders resources needed by future generations” (pp. 2–4). The emphasis here is clearly on the reality that economic growth may be, and usually is, an essential aspect of development, but that it is not sufficient unless balanced by, and complementary with, other aspects of development (see Sen, 2001). From the other end, efforts are being made through capacity building, decentralization, and other policies to extend the outreach of those goods and services and opportunities that are the product of economic growth.

**Political Development**

It is difficult in practice to distinguish economic policies from the political contexts within which they emerge; hence to a significant degree economic development mirrors its political context, whether that economic development is being driven by state decisions or is a product of international domination by certain powers. As an example of the role of political development, Stoesz et al. (1999, p. 13) consider three patterns of development that have emerged within the Asian context. The three are “the authoritarian capitalism of the ‘four tigers’ (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan), the market socialism upon which China has embarked, and the welfare state capitalism being attempted in India.” An important point to note here is that, despite the political differences among these three examples, all of the countries referred to have achieved high levels of development; and differences between them may well be due more to the nature and history of each country than to the precise nature of the political regime.

Other writers have explored the links between democracy and development. While some writers have maintained that democracy is an essential prerequisite to economic and social development, others point out that some democracies have failed to develop while some nondemocracies have progressed extremely well. As Diamond, Linz, and Lipset (1989, p. 33) put it: “democracy is not incompatible with a low level of development,” and they cite India, Sri Lanka, and Papua New Guinea. However, they go on to write,

This is not to deny the general positive correlation between democracy and development in the larger world. Nor is it to ignore the pressures and props for democracy that derive from a higher level of socioeconomic development, with the expansion it yields in income and education, and thus political participation.
Does democracy then lead to development, or does development lead to democracy? (See Sen, 2001, chap. 6.) The UNDP (2002, p. 3) concludes that “advancing human development requires governance that is democratic in both form and substance—for the people and by the people.” Or does development at least sometimes require a stronger political hand to guide its progress than democracy often permits—a popular argument in some countries but one for which the UNDP (2002, p. 4) maintains there is no evidence? The debate raises the question of what constitutes democracy. As Randall and Theobald (1998, p. 38) point out: “political scientists are finally acknowledging the historically and culturally exceptional and contingent nature of democracy in the west,” and therefore accepting that democracy can assume various forms. They go on to say,

From the late 1980s, a vast literature has emerged seeking to explain and evaluate the phenomenon of democratization both in the Third World and more globally. Partly for this very reason no single theory of democratization has gained ascendancy (p. 40). . . . [The] tendency to identify democracy with its western, liberal, variant echoes the ethnocentricity of the earlier political development literature. (p. 44)

While the debate continues on the precise relationship between political forms and development, there can be little doubt that the process of government is often as important as the form, and there has, particularly since the 1990s, been much concern with corruption and inefficiencies within many political systems worldwide (e.g., Easterly, 2002, chap. 12; World Bank, 1997). As Randall and Theobald (1998, p. 40) comment,

By 1989 the World Bank was calling for “good governance,” though at this stage, the emphasis was mainly on fighting corruption, promoting accountability and efficient administration. Increasingly, although never consistently, the content widened to include democratic accountability through multi-party elections.

From this brief look at the political path to development, we would have to conclude that, while the political factor plays an important role in development, it is a factor that varies greatly in its impact on development. Moreover, it is obviously only one factor in achieving development, and the degree of its importance will vary from place to place and from time to time. In addition to the above points, one way of appreciating the place of political development is to envision society as composed of several sectors. The sector of governance is clearly of importance, as also is the economic or for-profit sector discussed earlier. In addition to these two, however, are the civil society sector and the sector which, in our view, constitutes the foundations of any society, namely the sector of individuals-families-communities.

The importance of civil society, and of its role in political development as well as in other areas of society, is stressed by many writers. Randall and Theobald (1998, p. 205) express it well:

The closer we approach the industrial era, the more civil society expresses itself in highly institutionalized formal organizations such as trades unions, professional associations, independent political parties, pressure groups and other voluntary associations. Such bodies obviously played a crucial role in the emergence not only of modern democracy but of welfare state capitalism—a system in which the state in committing itself to underwriting the standard of living of the masses generates a degree of confidence in the public character of the state: that the state exists to serve civil society.

Political development cannot be imposed on a nation by outsiders (highlighted again by international efforts to rebuild political systems post-conflict, as in Cambodia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq) or by minority
power groups within a nation; ideally it represents the formalization of the aspirations and values of local communities, mediated through the structures of civil society, which in turn holds the political system that emerges accountable to the people.

However, political leadership, formation, and developments at national, regional, and global levels are often far from this ideal situation. Many political leaders receive their training in the West, nurture allegiances with the West, and transfer huge personal financial reserves to the West. On the one hand, they often play with nation-building emotions of communities and the masses and, on the other hand, they accept implicit and explicit interference in the political and economic development of the country, simply to remain in power, irrespective of whether they have democratic, socialist, or communist forms of government. There are some political leaders and developments that resist western hegemony and oppose external interference; and there are others that change their international allegiances depending on circumstances. Political developments, including leadership, have highly significant implications for national development, through the formation of blocs, international sanctions, global isolation, and external interference in national development.

Human Resource Development

The next path to development that we need to consider is human resource led development. Behrman (1990), in an ILO (International Labour Organisation) document, poses the key questions:

To what extent is it possible for developing economies to change their comparative advantages from primary commodity and other low skill labour-intensive products to more skill-intensive goods and services through the deliberate expansion of human resources? To what extent is it desirable to adopt a human resource led strategy that favours human resource investments through policies beyond what would occur in the normal course of development? (Executive Summary)

Perhaps we should start with a definition of two key terms. Todaro (1997, p. 697) defines human capital and human resources as follows:

Human capital: Productive investments embodied in human persons. These include skills, abilities, ideals, and health resulting from expenditures on education, on-the-job training programs, and medical care.

Human resources: The quantity and quality of a nation’s labor force.

Both definitions have a strong economic thrust, understandable in a text on economic development. We shall suggest, however, a broader appreciation of human resources.

Human resources development is essentially focused on investing in people. However, this investment is for various purposes, achieved through a variety of programs, and undertaken by a range of development agents. One key purpose is economic development, as is implied in Todaro’s definitions above. Todaro argues that “a country’s potential for economic growth is greatly influenced by its endowments of physical resources . . . and human resources” (1997, p. 33). He continues,

In the realm of human resource endowments, not only are sheer numbers of people and their skill levels important, but so also are their cultural outlooks, attitudes towards work, access to information, willingness to innovate, and desire for self-improvement. . . . Thus the nature and character of a country’s human resources are important determinants of its economic structure.

In terms of the evidence of a link between human resources and economic development, Behrman (1990, p. 89) writes,
There seems to be some evidence about the association between human resource investments and development, though there are some outliers for which such an association does not appear to hold very well (e.g. Cuba, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Kerala in India, Brazil, Togo). But there is surprisingly little systematic quantitative evidence for the proposition that human resource investments cause substantial development.

On the basis of the available evidence, Behrman is inclined to the position that, while expenditure on basic education and health is clearly warranted, other prohuman resource developments are probably not. Todaro’s point above, that many other factors come into play in determining economic outcomes, is emphasized by other writers such as Landes (1998). Landes focuses on such factors as geography and culture as significantly influencing final outcomes.

A further aspect of the link between human resource development and economic development relates to people as consumers and participants. Economic development is contingent on finding markets for products, either at home or abroad, and markets depend on people’s ability and willingness to consume. This ability is influenced largely by people’s participation in economic development, while the willingness relates to cultural and value factors. So along with people’s direct contribution to economic development as productive assets, which would seem to rest on some human resource development efforts, human resource development is in reality required to render people active participants in the economic process at all levels. As Midgley (1995a, p. 159) puts it: “Investments in human and social capital are urgently needed if people are to have the educational levels and skills to utilize the opportunities created by economic development.”

A second purpose of human resource development is to facilitate political development. If people are to be active participants in the political life of their society they need, generally speaking, to be literate and to enjoy reasonable health, and certainly to be free from having to devote all their time and energy to surviving. Hence, human resource development, that at least serves to meet basic needs and to provide basic health and education, would appear to be a prerequisite for political development. However, as Corner (1986, p. 14) points out, political considerations might also induce a government to deliberately neglect human resource development. She writes: “Particularly in respect to education, human resource development strategies tend to promote political change rather than preserve the status quo,” leading some governments, preoccupied with maintaining their power, to shy away from it.

A third and very specific purpose of human resource development is poverty reduction. As the World Bank (1990, p. 79) writes regarding investing in people,

There is overwhelming evidence that human capital is one of the keys to reducing poverty. Moreover, improvements in health, education, and nutrition reinforce each other. But the poor generally lack access to basic social services. There is too little investment in their human capital, and this increases the probability that they and their children will remain poor. To break this vicious cycle, governments must make reaching the poor a priority in its own right.

Corner (1986, p. 14) links poverty reduction to the political issue:

The political powerlessness of the poor is both a cause and a consequence of the poverty of their human capital. It must therefore be recognized that a prerequisite of a successful human resource development anti-poverty strategy is a measure of political influence and that one inevitable consequence of success is an increase in political power for the poor, a fact that may not be appreciated by many governments.
A final purpose of human resource development relates to the achievement of quality of life for all people within a society (see Sen, 2001, pp. 144ff.). In this sense, human resource development is people-centered development that has as its ultimate objective the overall quality of life of all people. However, while a high level of social service delivery accessible to all is fundamental to human well-being, such enhancement of quality of life needs to coincide with economic development so that people have available the opportunities which they are now equipped to access. The UNDP (1996, chap. 3) has contrasted Sri Lanka’s high level of achievement in the field of social service delivery, but low level of economic development, with India’s high level of economic development alongside a low level of social service delivery to many parts of the country, and especially to women. Clearly these two levels of development need to complement each other.

The achievement of human resource development is through programs mainly in the fields of education and labor force development, health and nutrition, and family planning. Considerable work has been devoted to identifying forms of education that will prepare people for productive activity during their years of working age, and through formal and informal education programs and a system of lifetime learning. Investing in health is regarded by the World Bank (1993, p. 17) and others as “a crucial part of well-being” but also “justified on purely economic grounds.” The issues that arise relate largely to the scope of such investment, the extent to which the “user-pays principle” (i.e., users pay for services rather than services being subsidized by the state) should be applied, and the core one of efficiencies and effectiveness embodied in the many alternative approaches to service delivery. Such issues are extremely important but also exceedingly complex and situation-specific.

The final aspect of investing in people is who takes the responsibility. A survey of the literature and experience in the field suggests that it is a shared responsibility. At the highest level, the international community has sought to establish the relevant rights, identify appropriate achievement targets, establish basic criteria, suggest relevant agendas for pursuing the various objectives, and offer technical assistance. At the national level, responsibility tends to be shared between the government sector, the for-profit sector, and the nongovernment not-for-profit sector. Within this overall scheme, the World Bank (1991b, p. 69) and others tend to give to government the leading role, while exploring partnerships with the other sectors. Individuals also assume a role, however, as they invest in themselves through education, health, and so on, in the expectation of higher economic and quality of life returns in the future. Moreover, we might note that both neoliberal and neocorporative thinking see the individual agent as of central importance. (See Sen, 2001, chap. 5, for a full discussion of this area.)

Human Development

Very early in the post–World War II development process, various commentators pointed out that development was too often viewed in terms of its benefits for national economies, usually in terms of GDP and growth levels, or for the corporate world, and too infrequently in terms of its impact on people. Certainly by the early 1980s, writers were arguing for an alternative development paradigm. Korten and Klaus (1984) present this as people-centered development, of which the central concerns are “to enhance human growth and well-being, equity and sustainability” (p. 299). Roundtables on human development were organized in the 1980s (e.g., Haq and Kirdar, 1985, 1987), referring to human development as “the neglected dimension” of development. A central theme was that “human development is both an input and an objective of development” (Haq and Kirdar, 1985, p. xvi). These roundtables criticized the human impact of much economic development and argued for “redirecting policy
and planning toward the human dimension” (p. 3). The concept of human development, however, came into its own with the UNDP’s annual Human Development Reports commencing in 1990. These reports argued that development should be “woven around the people” (UNDP, 1991, p. 1), or “of the people, for the people, by the people” (UNDP, 1993, p. 3), while illustrating how much existing development trends were detrimental to the well-being of people. In particular, the UNDP argued against economic growth that was not beneficial to the people in several crucial ways (UNDP, 1996, pp. 2–4). In 1992, Friedmann (1992, p. 8) presented an excellent overview of the “politics of alternative development,” presenting alternative development as essentially an ideology. A similar approach was adopted by Ekins (1992), although he placed a much greater stress than many did on ecological factors.

Midgley (1995a) highlights similar criticisms of past development trends in his discussion of “distorted development.” Midgley writes,

The phenomenon of persistent poverty in the midst of economic affluence is one of the most problematic issues in development today. In many parts of the world, economic development has not been accompanied by an attendant degree of social progress. The phenomenon is often referred to as distorted development. Distorted development... is... a failure to harmonize economic and social development objectives, and to ensure that the benefits of economic progress reach the population as a whole. (pp. 3–4)

For some writers, distorted development reveals a strong tendency to favor urban areas and their populations over rural areas, or some parts of the country over others, or some groupings (ethnic, racial, religious, class, caste, etc.) of the population over others, or men over—women—the frequently discussed gender bias in development (e.g., UNDP, 1995; Elson, 1995a; O’Connel, 1996). Biased or distorted development is commonly seen as resulting in major inequalities within nations, and also between nations (e.g., UNDP, 1996). Correcting distorted development was commonly said to require a much greater emphasis on social development, and the World Summit on Social Development (UN, 1995) and much other work strongly affirm this point. For example, Midgley’s (1995a, p. 8) succinct definition of social development is: “a process of promoting people’s welfare in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development.” For Midgley and most writers, some basic degree of economic development was an essential prerequisite to human development; and this basic level of economic development has often not been achieved, as the World Bank’s World Development Reports regularly reveal. Easterly (2002, p. 291) argues that “the problem of making poor countries rich was much more difficult than we thought.” There is no panacea for poverty and no single economic strategy for achieving growth. Yet the urgency of the quest remains: “The well-being of the next generation of poor countries depends on whether our quest to make poor countries rich is successful” (Easterly 2002, p. 15).

Few writers have seen social or human development as an alternative to economic development but rather as complementary; in one sense as rectifying the frequently unfortunate consequences of economic development, and in another sense as addressing other aspects of human well-being or dimensions of development (see UNDP, 1996, chap. 3).

This linking of human or social development with economic development became for many an integrated model of development. Stoesz et al. (1999) present an “integrated model of development” as the final chapter to their text on development. Their model (p. 263) is taken from the UNDP’s 1996 Human Development Report. However, various UN documents were emphasizing the importance of integration at least as early as 1971, when one report referred to integrated development as “an attempt to achieve a balanced growth in the human and material resources of nations” (United Nations,
1971, p. 8). This particular UN report stresses the importance of community development generally, and of people’s participation in particular, for achieving this goal. The notion of an integrated approach to development was a logical and commonsense conclusion to any realistic analysis of the impact of development. Yet many politicians, economists, and others clearly believed that, if the economic house was in order and economic growth being achieved, other dimensions of development, such as social, cultural, and ecological, would take care of themselves. This manifestly false assumption of a trickle down effect has been difficult to shift and tends to be reinforced today by the neoliberal or conservative ideology. The need to emphasize the focus on human development therefore remains extremely important.

Externally Assisted Development

While most state-devised development has occurred with some degree of external assistance of various kinds, the focus here is on development that is predominantly funded and driven by external assistance. It is important to focus on this path to development because of its overall significance since 1945, and because in many ways it tends to negate the key principles upon which our approach to development is based, especially the principles of self-reliance, participation, and empowerment. External assistance, in general terms, can be described as foreign aid, which Todaro (1997, p. 546) defines as follows:

The concept of foreign aid that is now widely used and accepted is one that encompasses all official grants and concessional loans, in currency or in kind, that are broadly aimed at transferring resources from developed to less developed nations on development or income distribution grounds.

Foreign or development aid can take various forms. On the basis of the channel through which aid is provided, aid can be divided into multilateral aid (e.g., provided through a body such as the UN), bilateral aid (government to government), and aid channeled through the NGO sector. On the basis of type of aid, it can be divided into aid provided to government budgets generally, project aid (tied to the implementation of a specific project), food aid, and humanitarian aid (aid in crisis situations such as natural disasters and wars).

It is assumed that most developing countries will require aid to some degree and for some period, although some countries have sought to develop without external assistance (e.g., the People’s Republic of China). It is further assumed that only the western developed industrialized countries and Japan are rich enough to provide aid to the extent usually required. However, a key question that arises is: why should any country provide aid to another? One would like to think that the main reason is what Rieff (2002, p. 43) calls “the humanitarian imperative—that when people are suffering, even if they are strangers, it is our collective obligation as human beings to come to their aid.” While Rieff is here referring to humanitarian aid, the same rationale could be applied to development aid provided to eradicate poverty and enhance human well-being. Rieff (p. 57) comments further on this point:

What we now call humanitarianism, our ancestors called charity. The idea that it is a moral obligation of the more fortunate to assist the less fortunate and that those who are in need may legitimately expect help is one that is normative in all the world’s major religions. Call it altruism, call it pity, call it solidarity, call it compassion, but the impulse to help is so deeply rooted in human culture, that, whether it is intrinsic or learned, it can rightly be described as one of the basic human emotions.

Without necessarily negating this point of view, especially as it applies to the majority of aid workers, most commentators proceed to
voice considerable cynicism regarding the motivation for states providing aid (e.g., Easterly, 2002, chap. 2; Cassen, 1994, p. 136; Hoogvelt, 2001, pp. 191ff.).

Todaro (1997, p. 550) summarizes donor country purposes for providing aid as follows:

Donor countries give aid primarily because it is in their political, strategic, or economic self-interest to do so. Some development assistance may be motivated by moral and humanitarian desires to assist the less fortunate (e.g., emergency food relief programs), but there is no historical evidence to suggest that over longer periods of time, donor nations assist others without expecting some corresponding benefits (political, economic, military etc.) in return.

Hayter and Watson (1985, pp. 242ff.) elaborate on the self-interest aspect by suggesting that aid is used “to reward friends and penalize enemies,” “to open up markets,” to finance projects which are “essential for the profitable operation of foreign investors,” and to enable private firms and banks “to get rid of otherwise uncompetitive products.” Even more sinister, Hoogvelt (2001, p. 191) refers to Mark Duffield’s view that the new aid agenda reverses earlier developmentalist goals of “incorporation” of peripheral areas into the world system, and instead now serves as a policy of management and containment of politically insecure territories on the edge of the global economy.

These are common themes, although clearly none of them should be used to generalize about the purposes of aid. However, the self-interest motive appears to be validated by the way in which aid is allocated. As Todaro (1997, p. 549) points out, one might expect it to be allocated on the basis of relative needs, whereas “most bilateral aid seems unrelated to development priorities.” Eurostep (a network of NGOs from European countries) and ICVA (the International Council of Voluntary Agencies), in agreeing with this view, spell it out as follows:

Over 3000 million people live in Low Income Countries with per capita incomes below $675 a year. In 1990, these Low Income Countries received 62% of DAC ODA [aid provided through the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD and the EU]. By 1994, these countries’ share of aid slipped to 53%. In 1995, low income countries received barely half (51%) of total ODA. A smaller share of a smaller cake. (Randel and German, 1997, p. 248)

The figures are indicative of the fact that aid is not allocated on the basis of need at all, with disproportionate shares going to those countries of greatest political interest to a donor country (see Todaro, 1997, p. 549). And, as the end of the above quote states, overall amounts of aid have been declining in recent years, partly due to what Krueger, Michalopoulos, and Ruttan (1989, p. 305) refer to as “aid fatigue.” (Initially, ODA grew greatly in volume but has, since the early 1990s, decreased both overall and as a percentage of donor countries’ GNP, as detailed earlier in the chapter.)

All the indications are that the poorest countries can place minimal reliance on aid to assist their development; and that, even when many poor countries do receive aid, they will have difficulty securing it on terms that are appropriate to their development needs and goals.

Given all the perceived deficiencies in the development aid program, one might wonder why developing countries are willing to receive aid, let alone to become dependent upon it. Todaro (1997, pp. 554ff.) suggests one major and two minor reasons. The major one is economic, due to developing countries accepting uncritically the proposition “that aid is a crucial and essential ingredient in the development process.” The two minor reasons are political and moral: political, in that “aid is seen by both donor and recipient as providing greater political leverage
to the existing leadership to suppress opposition and maintain itself in power”; and moral in that “many proponents of foreign aid in both developed and developing countries believe that rich nations have an obligation to support the economic and social development of the Third World.” Hayter and Watson (1985, pp. 245–46) emphasize Tódaro’s political reason.

What then can we conclude regarding the overall impact of aid? Cassen (1994) surveyed a large sample of aid activities in seven countries and concluded that the impact of aid is broadly positive, but far from perfect, and that it seldom relieves poverty. Reasons for the inadequacies of aid are seen to relate to donor policies and processes, recipients’ weaknesses, and an overall failure to coordinate the many aid projects. In the humanitarian aid context, Rieff (2002) concludes: “We know that aid too often does nothing to alter—and very often reinforces—the fundamental circumstances that produced the needs it temporarily meets” (p. 24); and:

independent humanitarianism does many things well and some things badly, but the things it is now called upon to do, such as helping to advance the cause of human rights, contributing to stopping wars, and furthering social justice, are beyond its competence, however much one might wish it were otherwise. (p. 334)

Even at the purely economic level, there is a debate regarding aid that is well expressed by Tódaro (1997, p. 556):

On one side are the economic traditionalists, who argue that aid has indeed promoted growth and structural transformation in many LDCs. On the other side are critics who argue that aid does not promote faster growth but may in fact retard it by substituting for, rather than supplementing, domestic savings and investment and by exacerbating LDC balance of payments deficits as a result of rising debt repayment obligations and the linking of aid to donor-country exports.

Tórado expresses the hope that, in the future, the probably lower volume of aid will be geared more to the real development needs of recipients, and that enlightened self-interest may yet come to include a focus on “eliminating poverty, minimizing inequality, promoting environmentally sustainable development, and raising levels of living for the masses of LDC peoples” (pp. 557–58), but he acknowledges that this point has not been reached. Finally, an IMF review of aid states the overall impact of aid in the following stark terms:

Simply put, over the past 30 years, the vast majority of developing countries—84 out of 108—have either stayed in the lower-income quintile or fallen into that quintile from a relatively higher position. Moreover, there are now fewer middle-income countries, and upward mobility of countries seems to have fallen over time. (Casson, 1997, p. 13)

While most commentators on aid are critical of many of the realities they identify, this does not mean that they reject the concept of aid as helpful in the development process, or even as essential to the development process (e.g., Cassen, 1994, p. 14). Some criteria seen as necessary to render external aid of real assistance to development are emphasized by those same authors who have misgivings about aid. Cassen (1997, pp. 10–11), for example, remind us that aid is but one aspect of the complex relationships between donor and recipient states,

Aid is only one part of the relationship between developed and developing countries. International trade, investment, conflict prevention and debt relief are far more important for determining the opportunities for equitable human development in an era of globalisation.
Krueger et al. (1989, p. 308) emphasize the importance of dialogue between donor and recipient states resulting ideally in some convergence of views. They concede, however, that such dialogue is often adversely influenced by strong donor interests:

When donor interests strongly influence the flow of aid resources, the effectiveness of policy dialogue is reduced. Donors find it extremely difficult to utilize policy dialogue to promote better policy in the recipient country when the representatives of that government are aware that the security or trade interests of constituents in the donor country carry more weight than the policy reform objective. (p. 309)

What these writers are out to achieve is an appropriate economic policy environment in the recipient country, without which any aid is unlikely to make a significant contribution to development. The writers, however, do have clear views as to what constitute such an environment, namely “an outward-oriented strategy and rapid growth of exports” (p. 307).

Other writers maintain rather that it is the right of developing countries to determine the direction of their economic and social policies, and any pressure on the part of donors, whether states or institutions such as the World Bank, is unacceptable.

A further criterion that may determine the ultimate outcome of aid is the specific purposes to which the aid is put. There has been debate over the efficacy of funding large infrastructure developments, especially if such are either ill-conceived (e.g., some massive dams or international airports), or geared to enhancing the status of an individual leader or government, or to promoting the interests of potential foreign investors in that country. An example of a policy designed to encourage a beneficial approach to aid is the 20:20 Compact conceived at the 1995 World Summit on Social Development (see UNDP, 1997, p. 113), by which aid is used to enhance the provision of social services. “This compact calls on donors to commit 20% of aid resources and on recipient governments to commit 20% of public expenditures to the provision of basic services” (Curtis, 1997, p. 9).

This could be seen as implying that aid should be made available on the basis of certain conditions being met, in this case a commitment to increasing basic social services as an antipoverty and human resources development strategy. Recently, in 2003, the Australian government announced that it would consider making aid to Pacific countries conditional on countries showing a commitment to eradicating corruption in government. How feasible or ethical is such a policy?

Overall, we might conclude that the provision of aid should always be strongly influenced by the prevailing situations existing in recipient countries—the opposite to the perceived tendency to relate aid largely to situations and agendas existing in the donor countries. Prevailing conditions could include the situations in relation to governance, economic policy, poverty levels, social services provision, political stability, and so on, the intention being to ensure that the aid provided would be beneficial, geared to development needs, and appropriate in type and conditions applied. When aid is provided along such lines, the obvious consensus among commentators is that it is highly likely to make a significant contribution to the development process in the countries concerned and even globally. However, there remains clearly a dilemma as to the extent to which donors can or should exert influence over the ways in which aid is utilized by recipients.

Local-Level Development

All of the paths discussed to this point have largely involved the macro level of society, and have been aspects of what is commonly referred to as top-down development undertaken largely
by the institutions of the state. By contrast, the essential focus of the local-level path to development is on the individuals-families-communities sector of society—the micro level, and represents bottom-up development. Bottom-up development came to be seen as either complementary to or a correction of the uneven impact of top-down development. It was never envisaged as an alternative path to other forms of development undertaken by state institutions; indeed to the contrary, state institutions were commonly seen as possessing the ability to facilitate local-level development while engaging in development at other important levels. Friedmann (1992, p. 7) writes in relation to this point,

Although an alternative development must begin locally, it cannot end there. Like it or not, the State continues to be a major player. It may need to be made more accountable to poor people and more responsive to their claims. But without the State’s collaboration, the lot of the poor cannot be significantly improved. Local empowering action requires a strong State.

Early discussion of the local-level development path was often in terms of community development. As a UN (1971, p. 1) report puts it: “After approximately 20 years as a UN-supported program, community development has gained nearly universal recognition as a force for inducing social and economic change in developing countries.” This community development was carried out by workers deployed by either governments or NGOs. Of great interest was the fact that many governments very early on established large-scale community development programs, such as in Korea, Tanzania, India, and Mexico; however, much of this work was seen in hindsight to possess significant shortcomings (Dore and Mars, 1981; Campfens, 1997; see also Chapter 4). Many scholars in the development field regarded this early community development thinking not only as too top-down but also as too idealistic, in part because it regarded communities as natural units of organization (Esman and Uphoff, 1984, p. 49). In addition, many evaluations of state-run community development schemes were critical of them because no trust was or could be developed between the workers, funded and deployed by the state, and the peoples among whom they worked. These criticisms led in some quarters to a growing emphasis on local institutional development as an alternative to community development. Uphoff, one of the scholars to do this, explains that “local” can be community but can also be group or neighborhood or several communities together (Uphoff, 1986, p. 10). His model (p. 11) identifies three local levels—locality, community, and group. The development approach is then to work with existing local institutions, defined as “complexes of norms and behaviors that persist over time by serving collectively valued purposes” (p. 9), and promoting local institutional development where and as necessary (see also Esman and Uphoff, 1984).

Other writers, from at least the early 1970s, have referred to local-level development in terms of NGO involvement in small-scale projects. Cernea (1989, p. 124) suggests that these small-scale NGO programs were basically of three types:

1. small production-oriented projects (e.g., the establishment of a tree nursery by a women’s group and the construction of a small tank irrigation system);
2. production support service projects (e.g., building a village or group storage facility or a road and setting up a village-to-market transportation service); and
3. social service projects (e.g., a health room, a community hall, an ambulance service, a sports terrain, or a house for a teacher).

In all these approaches, the basic principle was “putting people first” (Cernea, 1991; Chambers,
1983; Ekins, 1992), engaging in people’s capacity building, and thereby facilitating a bottom-up development process. There was also always a strong focus on participation. David (1993, p. 11) summarizes the overall approach as follows: “The people are the motivating force and a local, people-oriented development strategy is the sine qua non of human development today.”

It is stated above that local-level development is in many contexts complementary to, or a correction of the more macro top-down approaches. It is, however, often more than this. If we recall Midgley’s (1995a) discussion of distorted development, we shall appreciate that it is very easy and very common for prevailing national (and even international) development trends to favor certain levels, sectors, or geographical areas within a nation. For example, development frequently occurs in the interests of the advancement of the emerging middle-class, urban sector, or in more productive and better located geographical areas. While often well-intentioned, inevitably such trends result in impoverished and undeveloped areas. This situation is aggravated if the advantaged sections represent an ethnic, racial, or religious grouping that is clearly distinguished from the bypassed populations. In such cases, distorted development is not only driven by economic development models that favor urbanization, industrialization, and wealth generation, but also by a desire to advantage a specific ethnic group over others while preserving their power base.

It will be obvious that the above types of scenarios render essential a focus on local-level development, for several reasons. First, there is the reality that macro level development often does not trickle down to certain populations and areas, or will take so long to do so that generations will languish in poverty. Local-level development may be all the development that these people will see, assuming that it occurs. Second, if local impoverished and marginalized populations are to battle for access to or a share of macro level development, they may need to be strengthened through people’s capacity building, organized through local institutional development, and empowered through participation in the process of local-level development. Third, active local-level development should bring the needs, if not the very existence, of such populations to the attention of those sharing in the benefits of existing development, and especially of those guiding it, so that a change process is initiated within the actual development models and goals of the nation, and not just in the rhetoric.

The need for local-level development is obvious, so obvious that one might be led to ask why it is not a major component of development in developing countries. There are several reasons why the prevailing local-level development situation in many poorer countries has not developed beyond some isolated local projects. First, we should not underestimate the difficulty of workers functioning effectively in many contexts, whether nationals or expatriates but especially if outsiders. Living conditions can be hard, working situations often unsupportive, poverty and various social problems deeply entrenched, local levels of negativity and suspicion high, and the local resource base available on which to build very limited. Second, there exists no ready-made potential pool of already trained workers. Any locals who have been upwardly mobile may be very unwilling to return to work in their impoverished area of origin; many nationals who qualify in social work, development studies, and so on may well prefer the easier and more lucrative work opportunities in the more developed areas; and most expatriates may well see such work as beyond their cultural, social, and even professional competence. The only viable solution may be to recruit, train, and deploy locally. Third, national authorities and ruling classes may essentially not be in favor of liberating disadvantaged populations, or even of diverting national resources to them. While this may in part reflect basic group selfishness, it may also have strong political and group relations overtones. Finally, many of the poorer
nations do not receive sufficient aid and investment, are too burdened by external debt, and are too held back by poor governance and internal divisions and conflict to be able or willing to devote resources and energies to local-level development among the poorer sections of their populations. It is for these reasons that the situations in both poorer countries and poorer areas of relatively well-developed countries will depend, for some time to come, on the ability of either the international community or national governmental or international nongovernment organizations to devise appropriate programs of local-level development. International social work should be able to make a significant contribution to this goal, at the international, national, and local levels.

**Conclusion**

Katherine Kendall, a preeminent leader in the early development of international social work, wrote the following in the preface to one of the few social work texts on international development (Stoesz et al., 1999, p. ix):

> International development is seen as one of the most pressing human welfare issues of the day. Despite the enormous strides that have been made since World War II in life expectancy, reduced infant mortality, nutrition, annual income, and education, the process of development has left untouched millions of people who live in absolute poverty.

Yet the social work authors of this text make virtually no reference to the role of social work in the international development field, and very few schools of social work incorporate many aspects of this field in their curricula. However, schools of social work are starting to teach social development, and to see community development as a key dimension of social development and so crucial to the development process. Yet few of these schools report optimistically on students’ responses to this field of practice.

In this background chapter on international development, we have sought to introduce the reader who is new to this field to the various paths that development has taken. Statistical accounts of the development progress of all countries are readily available from the World Bank and UNDP in their annual World Development and Human Development reports, while more detailed national reports are also produced regularly by the World Bank and the regional bodies of UN/ECOSOC. There is indeed a wealth of literature on development generally, but much less on local-level development that also outlines the way in which social workers and others might contribute to that process. We have concluded this chapter by focusing on local-level development as the dimension and level of development to which social work skills are most readily applied. In the following chapter we shall present some of the key approaches and strategies that social workers and others can use in this context. What we wish to stress here, however, is the importance of social work adopting this field as critical to the well-being of millions of people, and as one to which social work can respond and should be responding.
Since World War II, many countries have experienced various degrees of development and of social, economic, and political change.

Many countries have been subjected to imposed development through the processes of colonization and neocolonialism, such as the WB’s and IMF’s Structural Adjustment Packages.

Macroeconomic development theories—the linear-stages approach, structural change models, international dependency revolution theories, neoclassical counterrevolution theories, and new growth theory—have influenced the development policies and realities of many countries, often with adverse effects. There is no one path to development. Important lessons can be learnt and useful aspects employed from all theories.

Political developments play crucial roles in the development process. Genuine democratic processes, people’s participation, good governance and good leadership irrespective of political form, balance of power issues, and political stability are all important aspects of political development.

The path of human resource development not only facilitates economic development but also political development, poverty reduction, and improvements in quality of life. Responsibility for this development has to be shared at local, national, and international levels.

Human development is at least as important as economic development, and should be recognized and practiced.

To facilitate development, many countries receive external aid that is sometimes geared towards the needs of donor countries. External aid has been reduced in recent years and come under considerable criticism from the perspectives of geopolitical and economic interests. External aid for development is important, but the culture and politics of aid should address the felt needs and prevailing conditions of receiving countries. It also should be directed to those countries that need it most.

Without local-level development, macro development strategies cannot be fully and effectively realized.

Questions and Topics for Discussion

- What values should underpin the development process?
- Discuss the phenomenon of imposed development. What do you understand by the term?
- How should we understand development, and what roles can and should an “international development enterprise” play in a country’s ongoing development?
- Which of the various paths to development would you emphasize for a country’s development process, and why?
- What should be the role of external aid in development and what are currently the major issues with it?
- What potential is there in local-level development when actions taken at other levels are ineffective or even counterproductive?
Possible Areas for Research Projects

- Select a country or region with which you have some familiarity and trace its development history, bearing in mind the various paths to development. Consider the paths taken in terms of development outcomes (as measured by the WB or UNDP).
- Study the pros and cons of aid-dependent development, perhaps with a specific country or region in mind, and determine, on the basis of your analysis, what role it should play.
- Examine a country’s (or a small region within a country) development process over a period in terms of adherence to, or departure from, the integrated-perspectives approach (presented in Chapter 2).
- In a selected context, identify the barriers involved in preventing either external aid or macro level development from permeating through to the local level.

Further Reading