

EDITORIAL: THE STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT OF STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT: SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA 1980-1993

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'Words mean what I say they mean.' Red Queen, *Alice in Wonderland*

'Out of Africa there is always something new.' Pliny

INTRODUCTION

Structural adjustment can be dated to the World Bank's 1981 *Accelerated Development* (Berg) Report, albeit precursor World Bank programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Togo, Malagasy Republic) date to the late 1970s. It is taken – by most supporters and critics alike – to be intrinsically neo-liberal in content, but the 1989 World Bank Report *Long Term Perspective Study* in fact advocates a sharp increase (from about 20 per cent to about 30 per cent of Gross Domestic Product) in government operating expenditure plus human and physical infrastructure. Many observers – again both favourably and unfavourably disposed – see the World Bank and IMF as monolithic in approach and giving top priority to external debt repayment, yet in SSA the Fund's shorter term, more demand management focused approach is often in uneasy balance with the Bank's focus on output enhancement and institutional reconstruction. Both – especially the Bank – in practice advocate rather more significant debt write downs (for other lenders that is) than the Paris Club or Group of 7 have been willing to agree.

Even more confusing are evaluations of 'success' or 'failure' (neither usually carefully defined nor – inevitably given the African data base – fully convincingly documented). Many relate to broader criteria of success – usually adding to, rather than rejecting the Bank's – which could hardly have been achieved in a decade and are advanced with limited attempts to articulate how measures toward them could be incorporated into SAPs or brought together in a coherent alternative strategic formulation. The Bank's own 1991-94 claims of success are rather modest: that SAPs have contributed to halting mid 1980s 'free fall' and when pursued for some years (as evidenced by macro economic policy results) do seem to correlate with better output results, except for agricultural output which appears

uncorrelated to macro policy – at least in the absence of elaborate, unattempted controls for weather impact. Other critics clearly project positive trends in variables – e.g. distributional, ecological – which were on worsening trends before SAPs without explaining the why or how of such reversals. Whether this is a false counterfactual selection mistake or an insistence SAPs should, and could, have given priority to these issues (and to gender) is often hard to determine.

Looking back over nearly a decade-and-a-half of sapperly and eight IDS (the first five IDS-Sussex/Economic Development Institute-World Bank and the last two IDS-Sussex/IDS-Dar es Salaam co-sponsored) Study Seminars, first on Structural Adjustment and now Structural Adjustment and Transformation, two key points become clearer:

- 1 Structural Adjustment and its extended family have built up a technical vocabulary which confuses as much as it facilitates discussion and reasoned dialogue;
- 2 Both the Structural Adjustment debate and the content of Structural Adjustment as promulgated (and more or less practised) by the World Bank and its (unequally unequal) SAP SSA partner states have adjusted structurally since 1981 and especially since 1985.

The two main sections of this editorial are devoted to these issues, and to gaps in structural adjustment coverage and performance, not to an overall evaluation of Structural Adjustment nor of the Seminar Series. The subsequent articles are drawn from presentations to the 1993 Seminar held in Arusha, Tanzania including two country team papers and the country participants' closing evaluation of Structural Adjustment and what to do about/with it at home. In an attempt to implement the

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principle of African participation in structural adjustment, seven of the papers are by Africans who have participated in structural adjustment programme negotiation and implementation

STABILIZATION, ADJUSTMENT, TRANSFORMATION, TRANSITION: A NOTE OF DISTINCTIONS

Economists have adopted an annoying practice of taking ordinary English words and then imbuing them with specific, technical meanings. And then adjusting these meanings over time. Take the first four words of our title, for example. All appear in the Oxford English dictionary. Yet none of those standard definitions will give any precise or accurate idea of the meanings which these words have now assumed as technical terms in political economy. Our next few paragraphs attempt to remedy that deficiency for the lay reader – in particular we try to locate the distinctions usually intended between their different meanings, although this is not always easy since the operational meanings often overlap even though there is also a sense in which the first three words (stabilization, adjustment transformation) are often seen as a form of progression.

Provenance is important too. The words in their modern technical uses tend to be associated not only with particular measures and instruments but with the international institutions which recommend those particular measures. Thus 'stabilization' is associated with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), 'adjustment' is associated with the World Bank (WB), and 'transformation' is associated with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). 'Transition' is a little different – it is associated with the group of countries (mainly ex-communist) which are attempting to move away from having 'command economies' subject to comprehensive planning and extensive state ownership to systems that are often described as market-friendly or market-oriented which permit property to be held in private hands and which allow most decisions regarding production, consumption and prices to be decided by market forces.

Despite what has been said, it is not possible to list distinct sets of measures that will always be associated with each of these terms. None of the four terms has yet achieved that precision of meaning, nor ever will. Nor does there exist an authority competent to lay down standard definitions that everyone would

be obliged to respect. The paragraphs which follow should therefore be regarded as no more than a terminological guide to a situation that is still in flux.

STABILIZATION

Stabilization refers to the correction of imbalances which are held to be unsustainable. In particular the term refers to a country's balance of payments deficit which can only be sustained – once reserves are exhausted – if foreigners are prepared to provide additional foreign financing. If such finance is not forthcoming, governments are faced with the prospect of an immediate fall in their capacity to import. These are the circumstances which will impel member governments to approach the IMF. If the deficit is likely to prove a relatively short-term problem which can be financed with a relatively small advance then the government concerned will make use of the stand-by facility which it is entitled to draw on without the IMF attaching any policy conditions to the loan. Technically what happens is that the government concerned purchases foreign currencies from the IMF with its own currency and then pays back the IMF by re-purchasing its own currency with foreign currencies (including the interest charge) at the end of the stand-by period. But if the government's need is for more substantial foreign exchange support than that, then the IMF will set policy conditions for its loan which the government will be obliged to commit itself to in a 'letter of intent'. It is these policy conditions which constitute the country's stabilization programme. It is in the nature of the IMF's conditionalities that they should concentrate upon monetary instruments and that they should operate most immediately on the demand side of the imbalances. Originally, when it was assumed that most IMF users would be industrialized countries suffering temporary balance of payment imbalances, it was assumed that the financing (and the imposition of the conditions) would be relatively short-term. For most sub-Saharan African countries, no such assumptions can be made, for the causes of many of the payments imbalances are known to be, at least in part, structural.

Apart from the deficit on foreign account, the other financial balances which IMF stabilization programmes seek to correct are the budget deficit (excess of government expenditures over revenues) and the deficit in domestic savings (inadequate to finance required investment), both of which

imbalances are likely to lead to the Central Bank being required by government to create excessive credit, and therefore in turn to an increase in domestic inflation and a more rapidly declining market foreign exchange rate. The policies required by the IMF to redress these imbalances, and the instruments to be used, are traditional and will readily be recognized. They normally include:

a exchange rate adjustment – in effect what is normally required will be an initial devaluation as a pre-condition to loan disbursement to be followed by a commitment to subsequent devaluations to keep export prices competitive to the extent that domestic inflation outstrips the inflation rates in the country's main trading partners;

b credit ceilings – in effect restrictions on the rates at which total domestic credit should be allowed to expand, and separate limits on the growth of credit to government and the public sector;

c interest rate policy – the IMF favours interest rates that are positive in real terms, i.e., slightly (or even massively) higher than the rate of inflation;

d tax measures that will encourage revenues and/or reduce consumption;

e reductions in public expenditures, particularly expenditure on untargeted subsidies;

f a reform of policies with regard to government-controlled prices, usually in the direction of improving prices for farmers and allowing energy prices to rise to export equivalence;

g other measures such as restrictions on new external debt, the elimination or reduction of payment arrears, the liberalization of payment mechanisms, and the setting of a target for minimum foreign exchange reserves.

Some combination of these measures could be said to constitute the normal stabilization package.

ADJUSTMENT

It is an over-simplification to say that whereas IMF policies are meant to be short-term and to operate upon demand, WB structural adjustment policies are meant to be medium- to long-term and to operate upon supply; or to say that whereas IMF policy

measures are implemented mainly through monetary instruments, WB policies are meant to bear directly on the real economy. Nevertheless there is some truth in those over-simplifications.

The word 'structural' can mean many things, and there is some irony in the Bank having taken it over from the school of 'structuralist' economists who worked in Chile in the early 1960s and argued virulently with the orthodox 'monetarist' economists sent down by the IMF. To the question 'What is meant by "structure"?', Dudley Seers in 1962 answered as follows:-

There is some confusion on this point, since members of this school refer to the structures of income, demand, output, industry, imports, administration, politics, society, etc. etc. Broadly speaking the more Leftist structuralists mean by the word *all* these things, because every one of them is considered an impediment to economic growth and the achievement of a more equalitarian society. On the other hand, the more conservative adherents usually put the main, if not the exclusive, emphasis on the productive structure, since they are naturally less anxious to stress the need for social change.

As one might expect, the World Bank also initially concentrated most on the production structure although it has since then spread its conditionalities widely into institutional reform and less frequently into ecology, poverty and social service provision. 'The production structure' has been interpreted to mean both the proportions in which different goods are produced (public sector vs. private sector production, tradables vs. non-tradables, agriculture vs. industry, exports vs. goods for the domestic market), and the manner by which such goods and services are produced. Structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) and the structural adjustment loans (SALs) to support their implementation thus aim to deal with a large range of factors influencing both the organic composition of output, and the manner in which different types of output can be induced to increase. Of course there is theory as to how those changes and increases can be induced to occur, but for the present we are more concerned with policy conditionalities and policy instruments.

Some of these conditionalities and instruments (exchange rate adjustments, pricing policies, fiscal reform) are the same as, or very similar to, those

employed by the IMF, and both the budget and the financial sector habitually figure as main targets for SAP reforms. However the normal adjustment package also includes measures that the government is required to commit itself to in the following areas:-

a Resource mobilization:- budget reform and revenue raising measures, mobilization of private savings, measures to encourage foreign direct investment; encouragement of domestic capital markets;

b Use of resources:- change in industry incentives, revision of public investment priorities;

c Liberalization of trade:- remove import quotas, simplify tariff structures, improve incentives and support for exports;

d Institutional reforms:- civil service reform (reduce size and increase payment differentials), strengthen capacity to implement public investment programme, improve support for agriculture, abolish state marketing monopolies, improve prospects and support for competitive local industries, increase efficiency of public enterprises through commercialization of their management structures, close down or privatize enterprises that cannot reach efficiency or profitability targets;

e (more recently) Establish 'safety nets' to protect vulnerable groups, including in one case raising the minimum wage.

TRANSFORMATION

If the Bank's SAPs deal with the whole economy for the medium term, the ECA's use of 'transformation' may be said to call for radical change in the whole basis and attitudes of African society. The ECA report of 1989 is at one level a protest at what is seen as the failure of WB SAPs, at the suffering they are seen to impose, and it is also a protest at the subjection of much of Africa to policies imposed from the outside based on the notion that what is most needed is to get the state out of the economy, to allow market disciplines to function, and 'to get the prices right'. But at another level the ECA call for 'transformation' constitutes an attack on what it sees to be the basic factors impeding Africa's development – unsustainable western life-styles, high defence expenditures, absurdly high import-intensity of consumption and production, failures of governance. At the heart of the message is the

radical call that at every level of society African consumption patterns should be brought into line with Africa's structure of production.

While the ECA document in fact supports many of the same objectives that SAPs are intended to achieve, the measures and modalities that it proposes for achieving these objectives are markedly broader and in some cases quite different. In particular, the ECA would advocate much greater involvement of the state in guiding or controlling the economy through such instruments as multiple exchange rates, subsidized interest rates, food subsidies, price controls and import restrictions.

TRANSITION

'Transition' has come to mean the process of move from one type of economic system to another. Many have pointed out that although a massive literature has been written on the transition to socialism, very little had been researched in advance or published about problems involved in the adoption of a market-oriented economy following the collapse of the Soviet empire and the widespread abandonment of socialism and centrally planned economies. One problem is which form of market economy to move to – the Anglo-Saxon model, the Social Market economy, or the East Asian model? Another, preceding problem is – if one has a choice, should one undertake economic reform first and leave political reform until later (as in China and Vietnam), or must political reform precede economic reform (as in the former Soviet Union and most of Central and Eastern Europe)?

The difficulties and dangers of transition are better recognized now than they were at the fall of the Berlin wall, as are many of the measures that need to be taken. But there are still major differences on the issue of sequencing and, in particular, as to whether macroeconomic balance must necessarily precede external support for reforms (viz. the IMF reluctance to disburse to Russia) or whether, in certain political conditions, macroeconomic balance (i.e. the control of inflation and bringing the budget deficit down to less than 5 per cent of GDP) may only be feasible at the end of a sequence of other, liberalizing measures.

There is more agreement about what most of the 'Transition' processes must include. Additional to many of the measures already mentioned are

characteristic of most stabilization and adjustment programmes, these would be:-

a The creation of the necessary infrastructure for capitalism (e.g. a structure of property rights, laws of contract, corporate laws, bankruptcy laws, anti-monopoly laws, courts to apply these laws, proper governance of labour and capital markets, etc.);

b Extensive de-regulation of many other things, including most production targets and prices;

c Privatization of most of the production and much of the provision of services previously undertaken by the state and/or public enterprises;

d Financial reform especially of the banking system, the restructuring of inter-enterprise debt, and the putting in place of a new tax system to fund government expenditure;

e Liberalization of internal trade to be followed by external liberalization of trade and payments, probably first on current account and then on capital account; the opening up of the economy to foreign direct investment.

In Africa, while state ownership has often been high, paper regulatory structures even higher, and rhetoric Marxian in its stridency and vocabulary, no cases really comparable in practice to Soviet bureaucratic state capitalism existed. How a variant of transition would apply in the most state constricted economies (which are in some cases, e.g. Kenya, avowedly capitalist) is unclear. Nobody has yet taken transition as an entry point to African economic restructuring.

The above have been cursory, and the descriptions might well have been different had they been offered by other authors. But as a starting point, they should prove adequate for indicating the main differences in the operational meanings of stabilization, adjustment, transformation and transition.

DIALOGUE, POLICY AND PRAXIS IN FLUX

Structural adjustment in 1994 is by no means what it was in 1981 either in terms of conceptualization and dialogue or of operational guidelines and praxis. As neither states nor – especially – the World Bank like to admit own error openly (pointing to other

people's is something else), but states and – again especially – the World Bank do learn from and respond to experience, the shifts are hard to follow for one fully involved in the process and near impossible to grasp in detail – or overall scope – for an outsider.

IN THE BEGINNING

In the early 1980s SAPS were perceived as three to five year programmes which through classic stabilization and doubling of net foreign resource inflows, linked to – say – 25 per cent cuts in government resource use, would create the base for renewed growth in a restructured economy by getting prices right, halting public sector crowding out of private and doubling net public resource inflows to pay off arrears in respect to infrastructure and external payments. Distribution, poverty, gender, ecology and governance (in the sense of accountability) were not on the Agenda for Action and while slightly oversimplifying a bowdlerization of Nkrumah's old slogan (itself bowdlerized from the Bible) into 'Seek you first the Right Price Kingdom and all else shall speedily be added unto you' did headline the driving concerns of the structural adjustment missionaries. Not very surprisingly, that simplistic a message led to two somewhat different critiques – both represented in IDS' two earlier **Bulletins** on Structural Adjustment: Caroline Allison and Reginald Herbold Green, 'Accelerated development in sub-Saharan Africa: what agendas for action?', 1983, and 'Sub-Saharan Africa: getting the facts straight', 1985.

The first critique (in Africa and abroad) countered with an equally simplified opposition either in defence of a streamlined *status quo* (rather ignoring its frequently rapid disintegration) or of some – usually ill-defined especially as to how most African governments could be convinced to adopt it or how they could finance it if they did – radical, interventionist alternative. In Africa it certainly delayed adoption of SAPs and limited how much was done, how fast, how widely, not necessarily in any very coherent way. Abroad it had little impact on policy shifts and a waning intellectual influence.

The second critique was much more complex. In general it accepted a number of the Bank's objectives but suggested they were in practice neither easy nor unproblematic to define. Nobody wants 'to get the prices wrong' but in imperfect, manipulated markets

how to reduce wrongness (whether by intervention or non-intervention) and even what 'right prices' would be is – within varying ranges – open to significant disagreement by reasonable persons. While agreeing that Africa-wide characteristics did exist, it contended strongly that contextual structural differences did as well and were crucial to effective strategic and programmatic articulation in most countries. Further, at least some of its practitioners raised poverty, production by poor people, gender and ecological issues not on the Bank's initial agenda as well as suggesting that its, at least overtly, apolitical approach to political economy was either naive or disingenuous and – in either event – not very helpful. This approach has in fact waxed over the last decade and has gained a clear foothold in the World Bank whose agendas have changed as a result of internal self-criticism as well as of external pressure. In Africa it has become dominant in government analytical circles, albeit it remains in the minority in academia (perhaps third to simplistic demonisers and near sycophantic praisemongers). It has increasingly influenced government policy, not so much in accepting SAPs, who had few practicable alternatives in most cases, but in building up African, politically based (for worse or better), contextual and unconventional elements as well as broadening the number of real negotiations with the Bank/Fund into the Structural Adjustment process and its successive three year tranches with rolling annual reviews. Abroad, parts of this body of criticism did influence bilateral donors as well as the Bank's adjustment and addition of items to its 1981 Agendas.

EXTERNAL CAUSES – SO WHAT?

Two topics rather crosscut the schematic divide posed. The first is external influences and the second poverty broadly defined. Clearly a substantial portion of Africa's late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s problems were external event caused (including drought and to a large extent the Southern African and Horn wars). The real question was and is – so? The answer 'it's not Africa's fault' is useless as a guide to response unless somebody who can, and will, pay accepts the blame. The real criticism is that the Bank has sought redress largely through calling for more net transfers – and not getting them except by switching from 'non adjusting' to some, not all, 'adjusting' countries. Overall SSA's real per capita net resource transfers are stagnating (or, excluding survival relief, declining). It has

evolved (perhaps late in the day) a position advocating debt write down to levels compatible with servicing the remainder while maintaining significant per capita GDP growth, rising public human and infrastructural investment and balance of payments manageability. But – it has not given it a high profile. It appears to believe the global trading system (and the particular GATT changes since 1981) are biased against Africa, but has not attempted to influence Northern policy, e.g. in Montevideo Round, nor looked with favour on countervailing corrective tariff or subsidy measures in Africa. Nor, having admitted SSA cannot climb out of its trade deficit on existing exports and facing overwhelming evidence SSA cannot (and Southeast Asia didn't) build adequate non-traditional export dynamics on instant liberalization and quick fix 'right prices', has it sought to articulate alternative ways forward. In fairness nor have most SSA states nor UNCTAD.

THE POOR ARE WITH US – INCREASINGLY SO

Poverty – of access to education, health services, water, markets, production inputs including knowledge as well as to personal consumption – has proven a minefield for both the Bank and its critics. Poverty and absolute poverty in SSA are rising absolutely, as a percentage of Africans and as a percentage of world totals. Tactically the critics initially hovered between two approaches which in headline terms could be exemplified by 'Bank Butchers Babies' and 'Infant Mortality Imbalances Are As Crucial As Visible Trade Imbalances'. The first is catchier but less accurate; the latter is arguably true and can be programmed into a SAP but is hard to explain lucidly and succinctly. African academic, populist politician, and both African NGO and foreign NGO choruses both still chant (and believe) the former mantra; the Bank has worked with the latter band of critics coming 80 per cent of the way in principle and perhaps 50 per cent (on average) in practice. The initial focus on structural adjustment 'caused' poverty – except perhaps for 'redeployed' government employees (Bankspeak for 'terminated' or 'sacked') by both critics and Bank was a mistake. Few poverty reduction programmes can be articulated efficiently on that division which is usually well nigh impossible to make on the ground for 90 per cent of poor households – with the key exception of access/entitlement reduction to primary health care – primary education – pure water in some (not all) countries. Ghana's 1985

Programme to Mitigate the Social Consequences of Adjustment was a breakthrough, but its experience suggests parallel programmes on poverty outside main ministries (or regions/provinces) and overstressing the 2 per cent of absolutely poor who are sacked ex-civil servants is inefficient in reducing poverty or African criticism, however soothing it may be to donors.

Conceptually the Bank has – after a decade's gap – resurrected Robert McNamara's war on absolute poverty (e.g. **LTPS 1989 World Development Report – 1990, Operational Directive/Handbook** – on poverty reduction, 1992). Operationally, however, it still marginalizes it into parallel projects even if a state wishes to integrate it into its macro strategic policy and resource allocation core. Production by poor people (not least in a post war context which now, or – one must hope – soon, affects at least 25 per cent of Africans) is not an area on which macro or sectoral or even project economists have said much or have much experience but that does not explain how slow a start or broadening experience is being made.

Gender and ecology are even more tack-ons – even if the Bank has a serious unit in the latter field. They are ghettoized with most 'women's programmes' looking alarmingly like 'femalestans' to adopt apartheid terminology. Even in its broad concept and approach publications gender is included as a late chapter and rarely integrated into 'serious' sectoral policy articulation, much less macro policy.

On governance, the Bank set out in 1990 to march in a bilateral donor assault on non-accountable, single party, military expenditure oriented African governments. How generalities in this field were to be consistent with negotiability and operationality at the same time was never clear. What is clear is that the Bank misheard the bilaterals (or that they, like the good old Duke of York, marched political conditionality up the hill and then marched it down again). By 1993 the Bank (probably wisely) was back to accountability (ironically without providing much leadership in structural reform of public sector accounts) and participation (at least when not too difficult nor time consuming).

Participation is a broader problem area for the World Bank. It really does want countries to 'own' their programmes by writing most of them – even if Vice President Jaycox's 1993 speech envisaging

World Bank response to, fine tuning of, mobilization for (or implicitly total rejection of) African produced SAPs, PPPs (Priority Policy Papers) and PPPIs (Priority Programmes for Public Investment) is perhaps more purist than the current institutional stance. Unfortunately the Bank also really does believe any reasonable team would produce a SAP 90 per cent identical to what the Bank had drafted and on the 10 per cent, if it had a case for change, that the Bank would quickly buy it in the negotiating context. 1981-1993 evidence (or even 1985-1993) does not support those beliefs – *au contraire* by and large. Further, the present leisurely pace of Bank document production or draft revision and the very short period for country response are consistent neither with 'ownership' nor with in-country breadth of participation (even when the Bank does not seek to limit draft circulation to ten persons or less).

QUO VADIS

As of 1994 SAPs are open ended as to time – Ghana's is over a decade old and is tacitly expected to see in the new decade. The only SSA economy to graduate from sappy was Mauritius. This is not only because pre grant current account external balance gaps do not close (the flagship Ghana programme's rose explosively in the late 1980s and early 1990s as cocoa prices collapsed while gold and timber edged down in real unit value terms). All changes – market or institutional – take longer than expected to plan, to execute and to show results. The imperfections of state intervention to redress market and private institutional failure had initially blinded the Bank, its allies and even pragmatic critics to how severe the market and private institutional failures had been and how quickly they would re-emerge (whether from hibernation or undercover channels) on deregulation and privatization. Nor has raising government efficiency been helped by confusing candle-end collecting payroll cuts and exorcizing ghost workers with serious public service reform starting with goals and leading through instruments, procedures, employees needed to efficient wage/salary levels (in two thirds or more of cases much higher – anyone who supposes \$10-\$15 a month versus a household absolute poverty line of \$75 can buy competent, devoted service is himself the monkey, not the nurse).

In principle the Agenda is more or less complete – distribution, poverty, gender, ecology,

accountability, participation, a pro active (not a passive) state enabling role are all on it. But all are in practice marginalized or at least ill-integrated with main sectoral, let alone macro, strategies. Indeed the dreaded Public Expenditure Programme (PEP) missions sometimes appear to ride roughshod over even major sectoral issues and proposals of the Bank's own sectoral missions.

What report card to give Structural Adjustment in SSA is a somewhat academic question even if 'Pass Plus – could do better, must try harder, inadequately analytical and innovative' comes to mind for both – as an average (with First minus to Fail minus ranges for both!).

On the Bank's 1981 projection SSA did astoundingly well in the 1980s. **Agenda For Action** estimated an SSA 1970s growth rate of 1.8 per cent could be raised to 3.5 per cent over the 1980s with, a.) its policies, b.) a doubling of real resource inflows, c.) moderate terms of trade gains, or to 2.5 per cent if real resource inflows stagnated. Terms of trade collapsed – costing a minimum of 1 per cent a year off growth – while non-survival real inflows rose little. So **Agenda's** possible projection adjusts to 1.5 per cent a year. In the 1980s SSA actually grew 2 per cent a year. However reassuring that is in the abstract, it is not very helpful to most Africans nor to the sustainability of most African programmes. Massive effort over a decade for a 1 per cent to 1.5 per cent a year fall in per capita real resources available in an initially poor country is the road to collapse by implosion. Even Ghana's 5 per cent plus annual growth trend is barely enough to produce adequate consumption gains and public service access improvement to be sustainable. (Barely but apparently just enough. The 1983-1992 SAP government was re-elected in a competitive election.)

The true question is not 'what else?' – in the world economic environment of the 1990s no SSA country can in fact survive without internalizing most SAP principles. But 'what, when, how, which priorities (and why) with what interactions?' are questions which do need to be asked. The structural adjustment of structural adjustment is – operationally – as far from completion as the main heads on the SAP agenda itself. Few SAPs have any claim to efficiency prizes and that they 'stopped free fall' is a convincing first two to four year claim if and only if 'and that led first to 4 per cent and then 6 per cent growth rates consistent with reducing all imbalances including, infrastructural, social and human' can be claimed for the subsequent pair of – say – five year tranches.

Most of the answers – or parts of answers – do not lie at conceptual level, in non-African academic (or financing) institutions nor in self accountable (or donor accountable) expatriate enclaves masquerading as African Capacity Building. They lie in articulation and ground level praxis, in Africa, from Africans. Perhaps the most refreshing aspect of the seminar series is the rising proportion of participants who agree with that evaluation, have the intellectual and – less often? – field observational capacity to act on it and begin to see ways of doing so.

The Spanish proverb 'let there be no new things' will not do in Africa – the old things are inherently and increasingly unendurable. Only Africans can, in the end, validate Pliny and create new things (as some individuals, institutions and countries have begun to do) because ultimately the welfare of Africa and of Africans is of primary concern only to Africans and only they have to live with the full consequences of the decisions made.