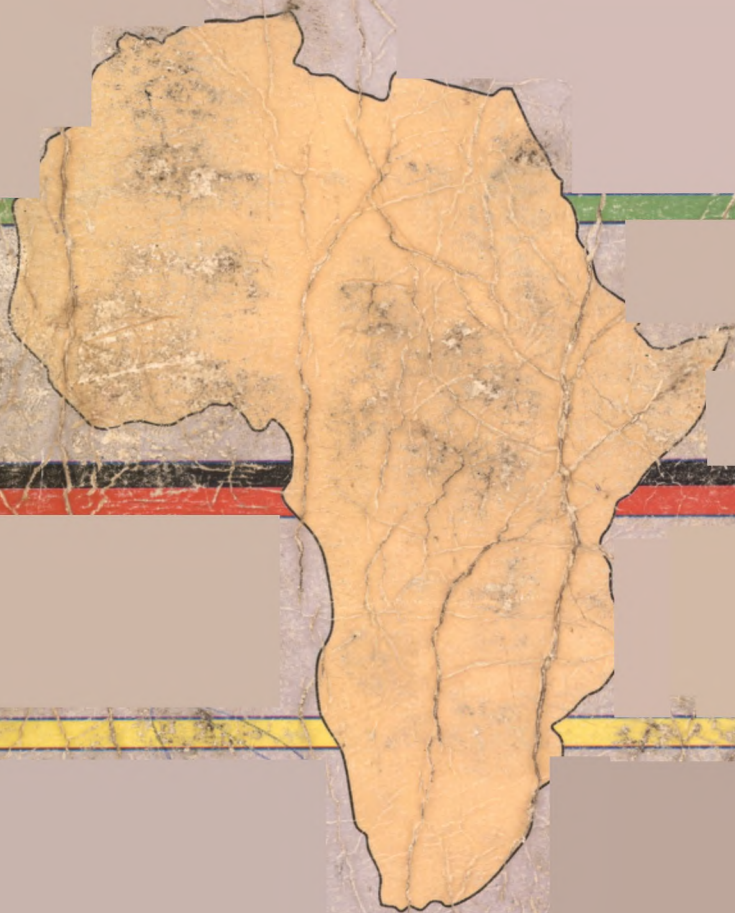


# **The Human Factor Approach to Development in Africa**



**Edited by**  
**Ali G. Chivaura and Claude G. Mararike**

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Vimbai G. Chivaura and Claude G. Mararike



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Publications

Chapter Thirteen:	The Human Factor: Tourism and Development <i>Francis Adu-Febiri</i> .....	157
Chapter Fourteen:	The Human Factor and Structural Adjustment Programmes <i>Anders Närman</i> .....	171
Chapter Fifteen	The Human Factor and Effective Management of Capital and Technology <i>Harold Harder</i> .....	182

**PART FOUR: THE HUMAN FACTOR AND LEADERSHIP**

Chapter Sixteen:	Leadership and Accountability: Lessons from African Traditions <i>John Nkomo</i> .....	191
Chapter Seventeen:	Leadership and Corruption: Impact on Human Factor Development <i>Dumiso Dabengwa</i> .....	198
Chapter Eighteen:	Human Factor Decay and Underdevelopment <i>E.E. Uwakwe</i> .....	201

**PART FIVE: THE HUMAN FACTOR: MEDIA AND POLITICS**

Chapter Nineteen:	The Human Factor, Media and Politics in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) <i>Claude G. Mararike</i> .....	211
Chapter Twenty:	The Human Factor and Conflict in Post-Cold-War Africa <i>Admore M. Kambudzi</i> .....	221
Chapter Twenty One:	Regional Co-operation: Lessons from African History <i>Witness P. Mangwende</i> .....	229
Index:	.....	235

## **Regional Co-operation: Lessons from African History**

Witness P. M. Mangwende

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### **Introduction**

In discussing the historical significance of regional co-operation in Africa, it is imperative to explain problems which have hindered co-operation, noting in particular, the effects of colonialism on the quality of the African Human Factor (HF) which is cardinal to the development of any organization, institution, region or country.

Two main forms of regional co-operation existed before the invasion of Africa by Arab and European imperialism. These were commercial long-distance trade and the political formation of large states through the unification of several small ones.

In suggesting how present day Africa could evolve new forms of regional co-operation, emphasis in this regard should be placed on developing the appropriate HF first which would be capable of bringing about the desired co-operation.

### **Review of trade in early kingdoms and empires**

West Africa had its vast empires where trade in iron, salt and other products were important economic factors in their creation. These empires included earlier kingdoms in Ghana, Karnem-Bornu and, much later, Mali, Songhay and Sokoto. People, goods, ideas and everything else moved rather more freely between these empires than they are allowed to do today. Later, regional organizations began to develop as a result of these interstate trade activities.

North Africa had its own early economic and political ties which even included the other side of the Mediterranean Sea, such as Spain and Portugal or the Iberian peninsula. Indeed, even before the Islamic era, the so-called great African conqueror, Hannibal, went from Carthage to the Alps. But Islam came to become more important than any other factor in establishing a distinct region which today is still quite evident in the Arabization of populations in the Maghreb. This Arabization, we must note, included the slave trade which was one of the worst disasters which damaged the development of Africa's HF and its quality of life.

There was also the Nile Valley which had a history of large-scale regional interactions from the times of Pharaonic Egypt, Nubia, Kush, Meroe and Axum in a region that covers modern Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia.

In East Africa, we know mainly of the slave trade which affected a region that stretched over all areas where the people developed the trade language, Swahili, from the coast to the Great Lakes as far as eastern Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo. Central and West Central Africa as a region, had its own empires of the Luba, Lunda, Kongo and other groups. These stretched from modern Zambia to Zaire, Congo and Angola.

In Southern Africa, there were the forward and backward migrations of the Bantu that ended with the nineteenth-century Mfecane which spread Nguni people from what is now the Natal Province of South Africa, to Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and even Tanzania. Earlier, there was the great trade between the Zimbabwe plateau and Mozambique coast which were linked by trade to Asia and, by politics, in what have come to be known by historians as the successive empires or states of Great Zimbabwe, Munhumutapa and the Rozvi.

From the nineteenth century, patterns of regional co-operation were imposed by colonial systems. The British tried to do this from Cape to Cairo, as Cecil John Rhodes used to dream. They nearly succeeded, missing only a handful of countries but controlling long stretches of Southern Africa, Central Africa, East Africa (less Tanganyika), the Sudan and Egypt. The French were the greatest rivals of the British, and this history is still reflected in parts of Central, Western and Northern parts of Africa.

The CFA franc zone covers more countries than the former British colonies where so-called French speaking Africa enjoys a certain degree of regional co-operation. These precedents are worth keeping in mind in considering the role of history in developing the African HF for regional co-operation, as we examine the modern patterns which are of relevance to this discussion.

It is also important to emphasize the role of geography in promoting or retarding African HF regional co-operation. Current efforts to achieve such regional co-operation clearly seem to be based on geography since, by definition, a region is a geographical entity. However, even then, geographical location and history play crucial roles in the emerging patterns. It is, therefore, instructive to trace the historical experiences of the modern regional entities and understand their nature and potential for success or failure in bringing about Africa's HF development and co-operation.

### **Some definitions**

Some definitions, in this regard, are necessary in order to establish the basis for appreciating the situation on the ground, as far as the historical development of regional co-operation is concerned, particularly the various forms of HF co-operation and economic integration involved in the exercise.

Economic integration refers to the process whereby the economies or markets of individual countries are merged, in whole or part, into a distinct entity which can be defined as a regional economy or a regional market. Economic co-operation, on the other hand, usually refers to a more open-ended concept in which states can act together for their mutual benefit in such ventures as sharing or making available to each other, resources, technology or expertise; collaborating in joint projects or acting together in external economic relations. Co-ordination, however, refers to cases where policies, strategies or regulations are harmonized to bring them into line with those of partner countries, again, in situations where this is seen as being of mutual benefit. Co-operation or co-ordination may, or may not, be taken with the aim of promoting economic integration. However, most of the efforts world-wide bear testimony to the importance of these two concepts in promoting economic integration.

Co-operation as an ideal and a practice, is not new to Africa because, during the colonial period, the integration of economic administrative systems was a common practice which worked conveniently for the ambitions of European colonisers. Africa has had extensive experience of regional co-operation/integration, dating back to the last century. Prior to independence, many regions in Africa had relatively free movement of factors of production and almost unrestricted intra-regional trade in goods and services. During those times, the colonial links helped to bind the economies together, maintaining stability and similarities in economic policies. For example, the French administered Equatorial Africa whilst the British had British West Africa and British East Africa. In Southern Africa, there was the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The Southern African Customs Union (SACU) traces its origins to the end of the nineteenth century whilst the East African Community (EAC) had its roots in the colonial times. The EAC in the early days represented a very close form of integration, but it was disbanded in 1977 as the divergences in the political and economic systems of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda became too great. The Customs Union of West Africa (UDAO) was created in 1959 and eventually became the Economic Community of West Africa (CEAO) in 1973. This has now been disbanded and integrated with the West African Monetary Union (UMOA) into the West Africa Monetary and Economic Union (UEMOA).

With the expansion in the political emancipation of the continent in the late 1950s and 1960s, the issue of economic co-operation came into sharper focus as part of the overall concern with the development problems on the African continent. At the first conference of independent African states held in 1958, the importance of regional co-operation was discussed. Several attempts were made by the new governments as political and economic integration became major items on the agenda of Pan-African politics.

Two major schools of approach came to the forefront during the period of post-colonial integration efforts. Kwame Nkrumah, first president of independent Ghana, saw Pan-Africanism, that is, the creation of a continent-wide government, as the panacea to Africa's problems of underdevelopment and dependency. He argued that regionalism was an inadequate solution to these problems. Nyerere, first president of independent Tanzania, on the other hand, even though he believed in African unity, was more comfortable with regional co-operation rather than the concept of continental government. He saw this as a practical step towards gradual continent-wide governance. However, as the post-colonial euphoria of independence cooled down and the practical problems of dealing with the issues of post-colonial development manifested themselves, most African governments opted for regional co-operation as the best way towards the development of the African continent. Indeed, today, regional unity is the order of the day throughout the African continent, as the dream of creating an African common market is still being pursued.

### **The market integration approach**

Generally, the process of economic integration in Africa has developed along the lines of the conventional market integration approach. This approach was developed

in the late 1950s for the industrialized countries, but was transferred to Africa by both the British and French during the colonial period. The market integration approach enjoys priority attention up to this day. Free trade areas and customs unions were the principal forms of regional economic integration among African countries before the 1970s. Examples include the predecessors of the current West African Economic Community (CEAO); The East African Customs Union which preceded the East African Community as well as the original Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC) of 1966. These largely unsuccessful efforts represent what may be termed the first phase of the post colonial regional integration experiment in Africa.

From the mid-1970s onwards, several significant changes in the approach to integration appeared. Greater emphasis was given to the common market formula, and increasing importance was attached to the integration of the productive sectors, particularly food and agriculture, industry, mining and manufacturing; and to the integration of infrastructural development. These aspects represented a belated recognition that the trade liberalization approach was largely insufficient for establishing African integration. In addition, the above developments required and encouraged the establishment of multilateral development finance institutions, sub-regional and regional development banks and funds with the specific obligation to promote and finance integration projects. A final significant change was the shift in the geographical concentration of groupings as exclusive associations of former British or French colonies like the EAC and UDEAC which gave way to larger multi-cultural groupings such as the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Community and the Community of Eastern and Southern Africa.

With the establishment of the Mano River Union (MRU) and the West African Economic Community in 1975, there was an attempt to combine trade integration with co-operation in the joint development of industry, agriculture and infrastructure. These tendencies were also typified, on the one hand, by the revision of the UDEAC Treaty in 1975 and, on the other, by the establishment of several new groupings including ECOWAS. These include the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) in 1976, SADCC in 1980, the PTA in 1981, the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC) in 1983, as well as several other river and lake basin development schemes.

These developments, from the mid 1970s, therefore, represented the widening and deepening of a process in which regional economic co-operation became a deliberate active instrument of economic development in contrast to its former role as a passive device for ameliorating the operation of market mechanisms.

### **Factors hindering regional integration**

The integration road on the African continent has been almost always a rough and difficult one. Several factors have accounted for the largely unsuccessful attempts at regional integration. Trade liberalization has been used extensively, but in most cases, the emergence of industrial duplication where complementary industries are needed and the use of non-tariff measures, have resulted in an extremely low share of intra-grouping trade. The formulation and implementation of the rules of origin in most



groupings have been so stringent that they excluded most enterprises operating within the regional grouping or the goods they produce.

For example, rule 2 of the original PTA rules of origin, stipulated that enterprises benefitting from its liberalization programme should be subject to management by a majority of nationals and to a least 51 per cent equity holdings by nationals of member states. An almost similar provision was in the revised (1982) ECOWAS rules of origin and the Mano River Union. It is usually very difficult to envisage how such ownership can occur within a short space of time. Consequently, in some cases like the MRU trade liberalization programme, in 1981, only seven enterprises had participated in intra-union trade. In the MRU, 95 per cent of the industrial production was foreign owned. In most regions of African, foreign owned enterprises were the most productive and, therefore, the majority of the exports remained geared for external markets.

The third set of problems falls under fiscal compensation schemes. Such schemes, by their very nature, tend to be quite complex and difficult to operate, particularly under conditions of unreliable statistical data. For example, in ECOWAS, the scheme took into account three different groups of countries, two schedules of products (priority and non-priority) and schedules of tariff cuts varying according to country group and product category. In addition, compensation involved a budgetary transfer from one country to another, the fiscal use of such funds may have little or no impact upon the development of the productive sectors or in redressing regional production imbalances, since the receiving government was at liberty to dispose of such revenues.

Other issues which explain the problems of regional integration in Africa included the proliferation of economic integration and co-operation groupings in Africa. This inevitably led to the overlapping of membership, duplication of activities and often conflicting regulations and decisions. In West Africa, the MRU and CEAO were sub-groups of ECOWAS. In Central Africa, UDEAC and CEAO were sub-groups of CEEAC and in Eastern and Southern Africa, SADC and PTA/COMESA had duplicating membership. Therefore, many countries were simultaneously members of two or more sub-groupings, with the extreme cases of Niger belonging to seven such groupings, Burkina Faso and Mali to six, Chad and Mauritania to five, and Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Rwanda and Senegal to four.

## Conclusion

The story of regional co-operation/integration in Africa is generally not very encouraging. However, it appears that in spite of repeated failures and difficulties in the integration process in Africa, most African countries retain a sense of commitment to the ideals of collective self-reliant development. After more than 30 years of post-colonial experience with integration in Africa, successes are, to say the least, exceptional. The African continent is still faced with the challenge of replacing economic dependency with a self-sustaining strategy for growth and development.

The changes on the international economic front, as evidenced by developments in other parts of the world, make it imperative for Africa to take serious measures towards integrating its economic, political and social activities. African heads of states and government taking cognisance of the changing world order, together with various

resolutions and declarations of the OAU on economic integration, acceded on 3 June 1991, to the Abuja Treaty on the African Economic Community (AEC). The AEC was set to be in place in 34 years time via an aggregative process in six stages of variable duration and aimed at promoting economic, social, cultural development and integration of African economies, in order to increase economic self-reliance and promote an indigenous and self-sustained development.

The first two stages, which cover a total period of 13 years, that is more than one-third of the total time, aimed at strengthening existing regional economic communities and the establishment of such communities in regions where they did not exist. This period also aimed at the gradual removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers to intra-regional community trade. However, judging from efforts before and after June 1991, a lot still needed to be done in most regions although there were others which seemed to be on course.

Regional co-operation/integration in Africa has been tried for many decades. The Abuja Treaty represents the latest attempt to try and bring the dream of an African common market into reality. Given the integration experience on the African continent, both past and present, chances are that the African Economic Community will remain a dream to be forever cherished. But given the impetus that has been gained by the newly independent states of Southern Africa, this region appeared set to be one of the strongest building blocks for the AEC if it were to be eventually realized; or else Africa would witness a loose form of continent-wide integration/co-operation as those regions with the greatest resolve forge ahead the integration road.

The factor which causes the integration road to be bumpy and at times dangerous, is the absence of an appropriate HF content for the region. As explained elsewhere in this volume, HF content refers to those personality characteristics and other human dimensions which enable organizations and institutions to function and remain functional for a long time.

Regional integration as an approach to development is a noble objective, but its success depends on the availability of honest, committed and disciplined people who ensure that set goals and objectives are successfully carried out. Leaders and people of this character are the building blocks for true and successful regional and continental co-operation of the broad spectrum of the African HF. No organization can succeed without a committed and disciplined labour force and political leadership which has acquired the appropriate HF content as already defined in this volume.



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