

CULTURAL FORMS OF ORGANIZATION: IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING PROCESS AND HUMAN EMPOWERMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN MODERN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT The African continent's population basically still relies on agriculture. Two-thirds of the African population rely their employment and food on family farms, defined as farms that rely on family labour, which works on 62% of the land. Recent trends in African development are placing family farming at the centre of the international agenda so as to achieve positive change throughout global food systems. The Africanist anthropology both worldwide and in Japan, reflecting the fact that African societies are basically established on family farming, the discipline has maintained focusing on the relationship between humans and environment from perspectives of cultural context in the fields. Therefore, future of family farming has huge importance both in practice and theory of African development. Based on these trends of African studies and development, the author, focusing on the field of African family farming, will try to explain rural development in three African countries—Niger, Kenya, and Malawi—based on his own research. The author attempts to clarify that, notwithstanding the global trend of worldwide sustainable development, rural development in Africa has several potentially important characteristic dispositions, based on family farming: culturally embedded dynamics of learning, cultural forms of organization, and culturally tractable ways of empowerment.

Key Words: Family farming; Rural development; Learning process; Human empowerment; Modern Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Even if it is true to say that Africa has a huge and various potential to seek for economic growth worldwide, the continent's population basically still relies on agriculture. Two-thirds of the African population rely their employment and food on family farms, defined as farms that rely on family labour, which works on 62% of the land. In Sub-Saharan Africa, about 60% of the farms are smaller than 1 ha, and these farms make up close to 20% of the farmland. Further, 95% of farms are smaller than 5 ha and make up the majority of farmland in Sub-Saharan Africa. Family farmers can be found along the whole spectrum of food producers in Africa: from livestock to crop production and from staple food to cash crop producers, and they produce for both subsistence and local markets. They rely mostly on traditional modes of farming—many do not use irrigation, chemical fertilizers or commercial seed varieties. These family farmers also contribute significantly to ecosystem preservation and environmental protection (FAO, 2019a).

Reconsideration of Family Farming

Related to its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028) in December 2017, providing the international community an opportunity to address family farming from a holistic perspective, in order to achieve substantial transformations in current food systems that will contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By placing family farming at the centre of the international agenda for a period of ten years, this Decade of Family Farming is aimed to provide a possibility to achieve positive change throughout global food systems (FAO, 2019b).

Small-scale farming or family farming in Africa has been also at the focus of the discussion in anthropology of Africa since its beginning. Regarding E. E. Evans-Pritchard's monumental works on Azande or Nuer, we can easily understand its irreplaceable importance as the quintessential field of research for African studies (Evans-Pritchard, 1937; 1940). It is no exaggeration to say that anthropology in Africa has been established at field of family farming to discuss on cultural ecology, political systems, human and nature issues, urbanization and modernization, religion and belief, development or post-modern issues, etc. Moreover, no matter how far the globalization penetrates the continent, the focal significance of family farming in Africa seems to be unchangeable.

Trends of Environmental Anthropology in Africa

Recently, from the perspective of environmental anthropology, Machaqueiro & Grinker (2019) summarized briefly the historical trend of environmental anthropology. They identified the four important periods of the scholars in the sub-field of anthropology. First, prior to and following World War II, was the period of focusing on ecological adaptation (Steward, 1955). Second, during the 1960s, embracing small ecosystem unit or focusing on indigenous knowledge became popular as well as “systems theory” by C. Geertz (Geertz, 1963). Then, as the third, during the period between 1980s and 1990s, it was more holistic and diachronic perspective with the renewed analytical concept of culture effective for the study of relationship between human and their environments. And at the same period, with the emergence of environmental movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), environmental anthropologists became more involved with political power and policy making, by consulting and participating in environmental conservation policies, by advocating for indigenous rights and land tenure, and by mediating the relationships between local populations and the environmental movement, at the same time they were conducting scholarly research (Dove & Carpenter, 2008). And as the last period, they observe that there is an emergence of studies on the detrimental effects of human behavior on the environment. Research topics include anthropogenic climate change, the loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and the overall degradation of landscapes and habitats by pollution, industrialization and urbanization. However, they also noted that this fourth period symbolically expressed by the terms, “Anthropocene” or “ontological

turn” is less visible in Africanist anthropology, compared to in the anthropology of Latin America or Southeast Asia because, according to their hypothesis, the constitutive terms of African anthropology as a discipline have rendered the ontological turn meaningless (Machaqueiro & Grinker, 2019).

Referring to Evans-Pritchard’s or P. Geschiere’s studies on “witchcraft” for example (Geschiere, 1997; 2013), Machaqueiro & Grinker (2019) explains that objects of study are not just produced by theoretical approaches but that such objects can, in themselves, inform theory and shape cognitive methods in an intrinsic dialogic relationship, thus, it could be hypothesized that anthropological approaches to Africa—informed by the idea of “wealth-in-people” (Guyer, 1993; 1995)—rendered the “ontological turn” less necessary or useful (Machaqueiro & Grinker, 2019).

Focus on Family Farming and Cultural Forms in Africa

The author of this article agrees with this keen observation on Africanist anthropology by Machaqueiro & Grinker (2019) because, also in Japan, we can observe the similar trends or situation regarding Africanist anthropology in the country. According to Takada (2018), the Kyoto School, leading Africanist school in Japan, has ecological anthropology as its own important formative element. Ecological anthropology, resembling to environment anthropology, is a focus of which is on the ensemble of intimate interactions between human life and the environment. The Kyoto School, a team of researchers based at Kyoto University who work in ecological anthropology and who are led by Junichiro Itani and Jiro Tanaka, among others, stands out because of its long-term fieldwork conducted in different areas of Africa, as well as in other parts of the world. According to Takada, the trends that have characterized the works of the Kyoto School to date are classified into the following five categories: evolution of primate sociality; society as a form of adaptation to the environment; ecosystem and human society; environment, cognition, and culture; and subsistence economy and ethics (Takada, 2018). The trends of Kyoto School on African Studies resembles to the trends of environmental anthropology worldwide mentioned by Machaqueiro & Grinker (2019) above in a rather huge extent since the end of World War II. What must be emphasized additionally is the fact that the Kyoto School is characteristic by its field-based approach, trying to clarify the relationship between humans and ecosystems from the local cultural context focusing on the cognition of the local people themselves. The majority of Japanese Africanists are aware of the fact that the field of African family farming is a key analytical unit to understand the continent from the local perspective (e.g., Kakeya et al., 2006).

In this article, focusing on family farming, the author explains rural development in three African countries—Niger, Kenya, and Malawi (See Fig. 1)—based on his own research in the field. It is not his intention to make precise comparisons between the three cases or to order these cases according to any particular criteria, but rather, to present them in sequential order and identify the general trend of rural development in Africa since the beginning of the twenty-first century. The author attempts to clarify that, notwithstanding the global trend of worldwide

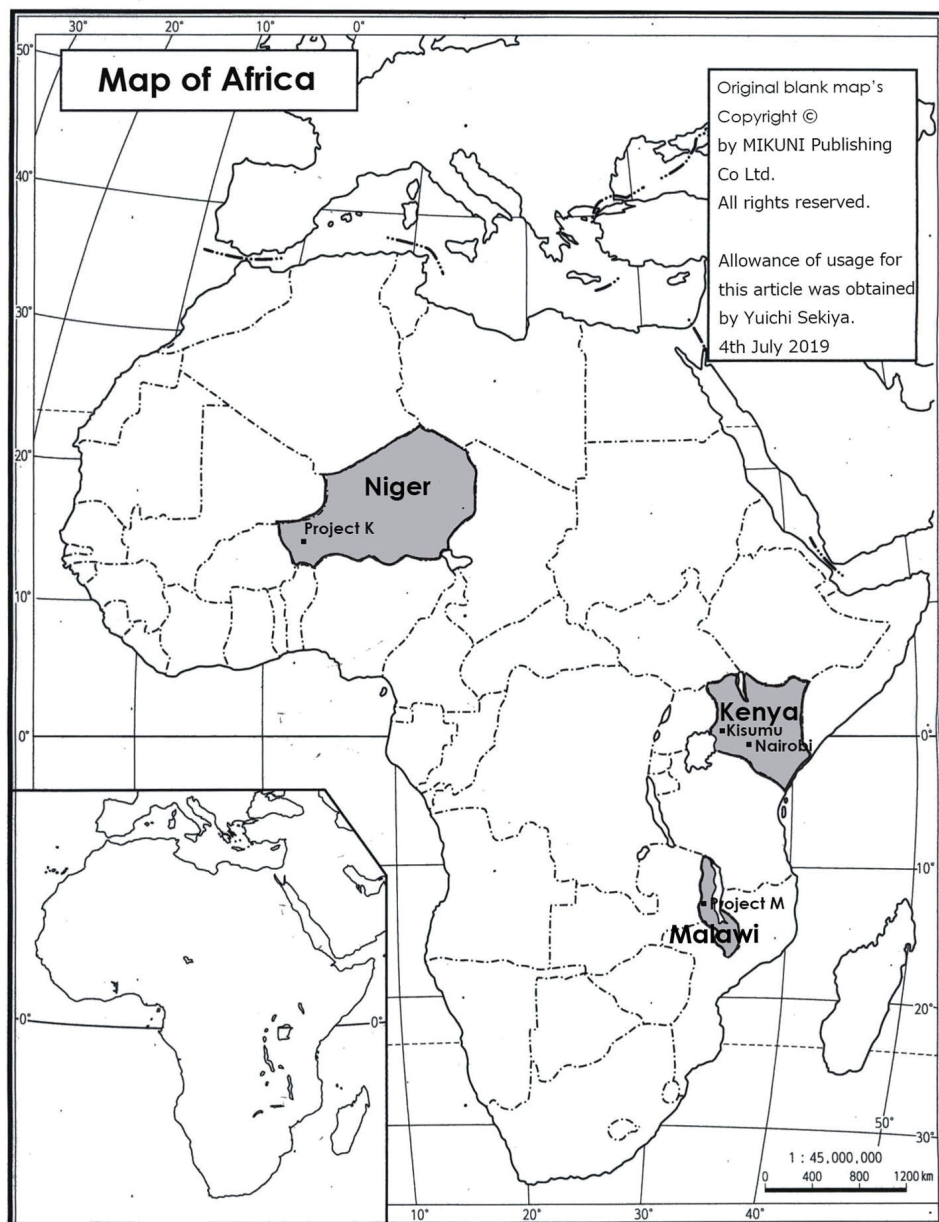


Fig. 1. Research fields, Niger, Kenya and Malawi.⁽¹⁾

sustainable development, rural development in Africa has several potentially important characteristic dispositions: culturally embedded dynamics of learning, cultural forms of organization, and culturally tractable ways of empowerment.

CULTURALLY EMBEDDED DYNAMICS OF LEARNING: CASE OF NIGER

The Republic of the Niger is a landlocked country in West Africa named after the Niger River. Niger is bordered by Libya to the northeast, Chad to the east, Nigeria to the south, Benin to the southwest, Burkina Faso and Mali to the west, and Algeria to the northwest. Niger covers a land area of almost 1,270,000 km², making it the largest country in West Africa. Over 80% of its land area lies in the Sahara Desert. The country's predominantly Islamic population of about 21 million lives mostly in clusters in the far south and west of the country. The capital city is Niamey, located in Niger's southwest corner.

Niger is a developing country that consistently ranks near the bottom in the United Nations' Human Development Index; it was ranked 187th of 188 countries in 2015 and 189th out of 189 countries in 2018. Much of the non-desert portions of the country are threatened by periodic drought and desertification. The economy is concentrated around subsistence, with some agricultural exports in the more fertile south, as well as raw materials, especially uranium ore. Nigerien society reflects a diversity drawn from the long independent histories of several ethnic groups and regions and their relatively short period living in a single state. Historically, what is now Niger has been on the fringes of several large states. Since earning their independence, Nigeriens have lived under five constitutions and three periods of military rule. After a military coup in 2010, Niger became a democratic, multiparty state. Most of the population lives in rural areas and has limited access to advanced education.

Project K⁽²⁾

The author describes here outcomes of a rural development project aimed at reducing poverty and desertification in Niger. The project was executed by the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) and the Government of Niger (GON) from 1992 to 2001, and involved over 30 Japanese volunteers and technical experts, technical advisors, and GON officers, as well as about 25,000 people from 22 villages situated along the Niger River. The author joined the project and analyzed the mutual learning process of the persons involved, and then examined the dynamism of organizational learning from the aspects of mediated action and situational learning.

The area in focus lies on the southern side of the Niger River. It begins from village K and extends to village N; both of these villages are located 25–65 km northwest of Niamey. The area includes 22 villages totaling 25,000 people, such as the Songhay-Zarma, Fulani, and Tuareg.

Although many members of the JOCV participating in the project believed that the fight against desertification was crucially needed in the area, and that this state of matters was commonly shared among the people involved, the circumstances were not so simple. Several of the early reports of the Karey-Gorou project, which started around 1993–1994, recorded the villagers' indifference towards the programs and demonstrations of the project team. Their interests were primarily concentrated on monetary or material loans or donations, as well as the

previous foreign aid granted in the same area. Thus, the villagers and Japanese volunteers initially faced a huge gap in project expectations.

The K project was started around the end of 1992 by the JOCV, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and the GON. The project aimed to aid over 25,000 inhabitants of 22 area villages in their fight against desertification. The JOCV and JICA sent three experts and over 30 volunteers during the project's 8.5-year period ending in July 2001. The JOCV team maintained a consistent number of 10 Japanese volunteers with one local coordinator sent from the GON, along with two local officials. The local coordinator was an expert in forestry and worked full-time as the team's leader. Two other local officials also helped the team part-time.

Details of Project Activities

Individual Japanese volunteers stayed an average of two or three years to execute the project activities. More than 40 activities were divided into four specialized fields: forestry, fruit tree production, vegetable production, and knowledge distribution for rural development. Initially, the project team could not execute their plans because the villagers paid little attention to proposals for environmental consciousness. The team's first task was to promote teamwork among the villagers. The Japanese volunteers took great efforts to help the villagers understand that they did not bring monetary or material aid, but instead, instruction and technical assistance.

Each activity took place within a participative atmosphere because the villagers' knowledge of the local environment and technologies exceeded that of the foreign project team staff. It was important for the team to involve the villagers in the activities, not only to show them what to do, but also to adequately match the project to the needs of the local residents.

Each domain was generally managed by the specialized volunteers. Thus, around 10 volunteers were divided into four workgroups according to their specialty. However, several activities were large enough that the volunteers had to work together, irrespective of their specialty. For example, as part of forestry activities, all volunteers took care of growing plants and participated in routine work in teams (Fig. 2). Volunteers were therefore requested to learn not only their own specialty work, but also that of others so that they could assist their colleagues when necessary.

Although the project team was composed of local Nigerien staff and Japanese volunteers, most of the decision-making process was discussed in Japanese. The team held weekly meetings each Friday afternoon with all the Japanese members for weekly updates and planning. These meetings were a critical part of the team's decision-making process, where the majority of discussions regarding project implementation or evaluation took place.

The Nigerien staff, including the project organizer, tended to be dissatisfied with this decision-making process. Although they acknowledged the need to conduct meetings in Japanese, their frustration increased as the Japanese team members increasingly made decisions on their own. In fact, the Nigerien staff



Fig. 2. Activities in forestry field.

Left: tree plants distribution in 1997, street trees of neem (*Azadirachta indica*), right up: 1997 and right bottom: 2008.

ultimately became more tolerant of the villagers' requests about monetary or material aid than the Japanese volunteers.

However, regarding the decision-making process of the team, as the Japanese were not very fluent in French or Songhay-Zarma (the dominant local language of the area), it was impossible for the team to involve local staff or villagers in the Friday meetings. Language barriers made it difficult for the Japanese staff to share their vision with the local staff and villagers. Regarding people and organizations participating in rural development, we tend to regard familial groups or societies as homogeneous units. However, if we look at the Japanese volunteers, for example, we can easily discover that each volunteer has his/her own personal intention or objective in joining the team. This must have been the same for the villagers or other staff and government officials, and it must not be ignored or forgotten that rural development usually takes place within a very heterogeneous environment.

Although each organizational or social unit attempted to function as a whole, each nevertheless remained heterogeneous. The manner in which heterogeneous groups could function as single units in the project depended on how the presenter tried to analyze the issues and explain them in a logical manner from the aspects of action research and learning organization.

As mentioned above, initially, serious differences of interest existed between the project organizers. Specifically, project planners, including JICA, JOCV headquarters, and GON, to a certain extent, expected the project to promote

greening with plantations or public engineering works to fight directly against desertification in the area. On the other hand, the villagers and most of the Japanese volunteers were expecting the project to work toward improving village life and economic conditions in the area. Thus, we can see here a clear shift of the main objective from measures for desertification to agroforestry activities aimed at improving the villagers' lives.

Organizational Learning

Each activity in the K project and its role was defined by the learning organization theory. The group of S villagers that was involved in the creation of green hedges, the group of four professional fruit tree farmers, the onion production group in T village, the group of advanced cookstove instructors in Y village, the group of elementary school principals, and the project team itself formed the team-learning spheres located in their own environment.

For example, a clear shift was observed in the ideas of the S villagers, who were initially opposed to the activities of the project's forestry domain. Only later, when they observed that the green hedges were growing, did they gradually begin to understand that the project team was not only distributing the plants freely, but also observing both the villagers and their lands and analyzing the physical capacity in each plant distribution case. The villagers also came to realize that the team's objective was to prepare them for the team's departure and to enable them to problem-solve and maintain the agroforestry activities on their own. As evidence for this, when the project conducted semi-structured interviews with the villagers in 1998, many mentioned the possibility of continuing the project by planting seeds directly or constructing a public nursery in the village. These results stood out among others because in most project cases, the villagers had a rather pessimistic outlook in terms of continuing the agroforestry activities.

The team staff was impressed with the S villagers after these successful interviews. Thus, when they made efforts to construct a public nursery or tried direct seed planting, the staff had faith in the villagers' ultimate success because of the clear result of the green hedge plantation. In fact, the green hedges of S village turned out to be the *raison d'être* of the project. As time went by, there was a greater consensus among the villagers and staff regarding the project priorities and the confrontation of the problems faced by the plantation. As such, the staff and villagers understood equally the difficulties involved in making a public nursery or implementing direct planting methods when the villagers experienced and learned together in the same sphere.

We can trace the process of team learning in the forestry domain by the S villagers and the team staff using written documents and records. However, the green hedges themselves, the knowledge or technologies actually used, and the memories of the activities shared by the persons involved became powerful tools for figuring out the process of team learning, breaking mental models, and realizing shared visions. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that the 40,000–50,000 plants planted annually as well as the changes in and sharing of visions that occurred among those involved were the most important effects and achievements

of the project.

It is important to remember that one of the major characteristics of a learning organization is that the whole organization will change itself flexibly to adapt to the circumstances in the moment. We also observed this in the K project when the project shifted its main objective from plantation-centered anti-desertification activities to overall life-improvement activities based on agroforestry initiatives. The following figure summarizes the team learning processes and their functional structure in the project (Fig. 3).

Because most of the villagers were illiterate, the project used methods for communication without written words, such as picture panels, video programs, direct conversations, and demonstrations to give instructions. This is why volunteers often felt unsatisfied in reporting their work mainly as documents or in numerical data, as they were aware of the dynamism of the communication types used

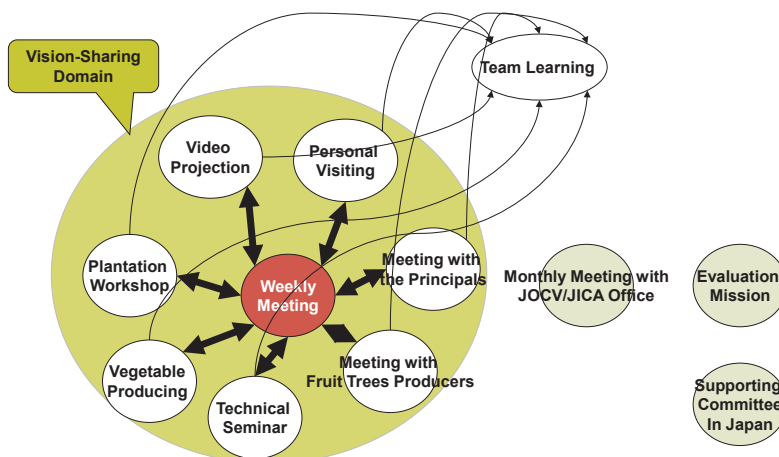


Fig. 3. Building shared vision and team learning.

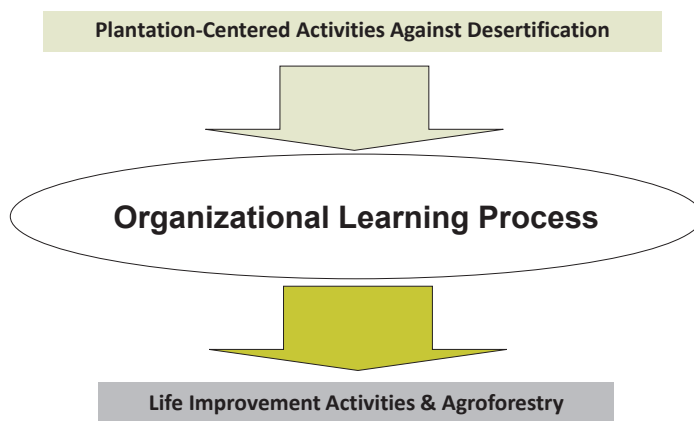


Fig. 4. Flow of organizational learning process.

during activities. Indeed, the communication types used in the team-learning processes supported the mutual learning of those involved and embodied the organizational learning of the project. The flow of this process in the K project can be articulated as shown in the figure above (Fig. 4).

The organizational learning experienced by those involved in the K project occurred mainly through cultural interactions between the Nigeriens and Japanese. The original objective of the plantation, which centered around anti-desertification activities, gradually shifted to life improvement aspects, including agroforestry. This shift in objectives was brought about by the strategic organizational learning process rather than time wasted or efforts that were ambiguously organized. Those involved always learned from their situation and formed team learning sessions to continue improving their organization. The main goal of the project was very clear: to improve the environment and the villagers' everyday lives. Thus, they created green hedges along their gardens for security purposes as well as to gain income from the cut branches. They also used improved cookstoves to reduce cooking time and decrease the consumption of wood, ultimately conserving trees. Although these clear objectives sound simple and easy, it was quite difficult to create common objectives, share them among everyone involved, and undertake activities. The entire process of organizational learning began from the awareness of tremendous gaps in understanding and ways of thinking about the natural environment among those involved.

Culturally Embedded Learning

According to their oral history, the villagers remembered the team learning experiences during the K project in their own cognitive way. Action research, therefore, in the organizational learning process using mediated action was effective in a manner that the written records could not describe. The persons involved experienced team learning that was unforgettable, and they were able to recall them by remembering the various methods used for vision sharing. In fact, we had discussions, negotiations, and also quarrels, during the activities, and it was difficult for us to understand each other in a precise sense, even among the Japanese volunteers. Moreover, getting along with the Nigerien staff and villagers was not so easy. In such a culturally heterogeneous situation, the extent of vision sharing is beyond his analytical abilities. However, while it is true that those worked together for a common objective (i.e., agroforestry activities to promote the environment and improve everyday life), it could be said that the real achievement of the K project rested not only on the practical results achieved, such as the green hedges, four fruit producers, onion-producing village, or the number of improved cookstoves, but also on the sharing of visions for life improvement and agroforestry created through various activities that were retained in the memories of those involved. Building on these memories, the villagers continue their gardening work with contributions from the Japanese volunteers (Sekiya, 2014).

CULTURAL FORMS OF ORGANIZATION: CASE OF KENYA

The next case is Kenya. This case aims to analyze the creation of a community-based organization (CBO), which became popular worldwide around 2006, when the Grameen Bank founded by Muhammad Yunus became well known. Since becoming more widespread, CBOs have functioned to realize people-powered, participatory, and social development.

The goal of this section is to shed light on the fact that nowadays, CBOs are principally based on people's purposes or objectives rather than on members' communal ties or relationships. First, it should be clarified what kind of organization the author considers a CBO to be, based on several CBOs from Kenya and their characteristics. Making a generalization about CBOs is a form of oversimplification, so the author will discuss his observations on CBOs from four aspects: diverse functions, strong and weak points, current needs, and future tasks.

CBOs are popular all over the world. In Japan, they are officially referred to as nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and they engage in multipurpose activities. According to the general definition, a CBO is a public or private entity that uses public or private funds, respectively, to meet community needs. In developed countries, CBOs are organized primarily as NPOs; however, in developing countries, CBO activities involve many kinds of profit-making functions that promote self-help among residents. According to statistics, the most popular activity of Japanese NPOs is social welfare for older persons or individuals with disabilities. For people in developing countries such as Kenya, the author sees three major opportunities for CBOs. The first involves development programs sponsored by international organizations, the second involves local needs and initiatives, and the third involves public development programs.

CBOs are sometimes organized based on factors outside of communities, such as the development programs run by the government or international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). For example, during his first visit to Kenya in February 2006, the author was introduced to a program called the Community Capacity Support Programme (CCSP) organized by the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services in Kenya and the Danish International Development Agency. CCSP was operating in 13 districts inside Kenya with around 168 communities.

Community Capacity Support Programme

CCSP originated from the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres established by the Red Cross Society during the 1950s; it underwent organizational reforms and began to receive technical and financial support from the Government of Denmark in 1980. In 1995, the program started shifting its focus from residential rehabilitation to a community-based approach in which targets improved community nutrition by addressing a broad range of social development issues.

Although participatory activities are promoted in communities and by local residents, the entire program has been suffering from a severe budget shortage since December 2005 because of the withdrawal of support by the government



Fig. 5. A CBO for empowering market women in Kisumu, Kenya.

of Denmark. When the author visited a program site in 2006, the author found that the entire program was in crucial need of a new donor.

The second case is from research in Kisumu, Western Kenya. This regional city gained worldwide attention in 2008 as the ancestral home of then-candidate for president of the United States, Barack Obama. There, we observed numerous CBOs founded to address local needs. According to the district officer, 6,000 CBOs had already been registered, with more to come. The author estimated that there were up to 10,000 CBOs when he researched the area in 2006. This figure means that on average every working person belongs to at least one CBO. Given that there are around 240,000 people in the district, about 10–20 people work in each CBO (Fig. 5).

It is possible to observe some characteristics about the common needs that lead to the formation of CBOs. First, people have a clear sense of purpose with respect to the objectives they set for their CBO. For example, the Disabled Group A is organized by disabled persons who share a clear sense of purpose in helping each other make and sell handicrafts to people both inland and abroad who are interested in their products. These organizations are based on collectivity rather than the local or social community. The Group B, another CBO in which the member help each other produce and sell flour with high nutritional content, was formed by various farmers from different places in Kisumu. However, we can also observe rather serious gaps in organizational quality among these CBOs; some are very effective and serve as models, whereas others have been registered, but conduct no observable activities.

CBOs, regardless of how they are established, have many objectives in common. Fund-raising is the most popular reason to establish a CBO. As mentioned in the



Fig. 6. A CBO for supporting AIDS orphans and widows in Kenya.

following passage, the Kenyan people refer to their type of fund-raising as the “merry-go-round”:

Mary is a very small vendor. She sells vegetables from a shelf set in the window of her hut. She is a member of a merry-go-round that has fifteen members, including herself. This is what they do:

Every day, day-in day-out, each of them saves 100 shillings (1 KSH = 0.01 USD = 1 JPY). So each day a total of 1,500 shillings is saved. Each day one of the fifteen women takes the full 1,500 shillings home. After each of the fifteen women has taken the ‘prize’ in turn—which takes fifteen days of course—the cycle starts again. Mama Mary has ‘serial number 7’ in the cycle. So, seven days after the start of the first cycle, and then every fifteen days, she gets 1,500 shillings in return for putting in 100 shillings each and every day. Mama Mary has been in this merry-go-round with the same fellow-members for two and a half years. (Rutherford, 2000: 20)

Many CBOs have been formed to help the orphans and widows of HIV-AIDS victims in Kenya by carrying out diverse activities, such as providing jobs for persons with disabilities and unemployed youths, empowering women and widows of AIDS victims, and supporting AIDS orphans (Fig. 6). Most of these activities have been for-profit. A unique case involved charging a fee for using a chair in the marketplace. One CBO raised funds by renting these chairs.

Forming a CBO has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that (1) people can open a collective bank account for their activities, (2) they can plan a project, (3) they can apply to receive public funds, and (4) they can



Fig. 7. A scene of baraza in C Town, Kenya 2006.

apply for foreign funds. The disadvantages are that if a CBO is reliant on a single large donor, as was the case with CCSP, it is vulnerable if that donor withdraws its support. There can also be disadvantages for CBOs like that in Kisumu, organizational solidarity falters due to overly diverse nature of the people who joined because of their interest in the initial objective. Several cases have clarified that it is still difficult for people from different backgrounds or societies to form a CBO together.

CBOs and Governmental Support

In general, CBOs tend to need outside technical and informational support. In Kenya, efforts to meet such needs are carried out by the local government. In Kisumu, community development assistants are hired by the local government to provide technical assistance and necessary public information to CBOs. However, their services are insufficient in terms of both number and function because of budgetary limitations. Needless to say, CBOs are always in need of more funds. However, in developing countries, it is not so simple for CBOs to obtain and control their budgets. To have a functional financial system, CBOs need to perform numerous tasks, such as fund-raising, hiring accountants, registering with the local government, creating reliable bank accounts, and securing financial advice. The needs of CBOs to adapt to local systems are still problematic because the idea of CBOs is still new for many societies in developing countries. In Kenya, there is a traditional social meeting called “baraza” (Fig. 7). The author attended a baraza in C town. Barazas are said to be important social meetings in Kenyan society. Nowadays, barazas function as a type of district development committee

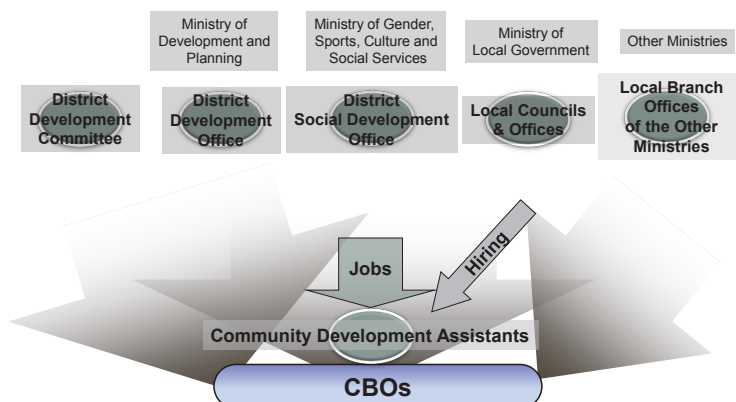


Fig. 8. Parallel structure of the administrative system: example from Kisumu, Kenya.

in Kisumu and involve numerous government officials and tribal chiefs, in addition to members of the community. During the baraza the author went to a ceremony held to recognize the best CBO in C town for that year. Witnessing the joy of those who won prizes at the ceremony made me realize how important it is for CBOs to be accepted by the existing social system.

As the above diagram shows (Fig. 8), the administrative system in Kenya has a parallel structure. Each governmental office is willing to support and collaborate with CBOs in various ways. However, there are very limited numbers of community development assistants who are hired from the Ministry of Local Government to oversee the connection with the government and CBOs. Thus, CBOs are at a loss in terms of whom to collaborate with or seek support from. Ideally, the government would increase the number of assistants, but in this case, it was impossible due to a lack of money and personnel.

The CBOs themselves have to be more powerful and effective to be sustainable. They have to be able to seek governmental or international funds by hiring reliable accountants or managers. They also need members who can generate productive ideas for fund-raising and effective plans for social empowerment activities.

CBOs as Cultural Forms of Organization

Noted Africanist Göran Hydén (2006) discussed the growing development of civil society in modern Africa. In *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*, his famous book on the malfunction of the state system, he tried to explain this by referring to how “community” differs between the African and European contexts:

... The important thing in the African context is that it is the norms associated with a nondistanced place that have shaped the ways individuals relate to each other and develop shared expectations about behavior and choice.

To appreciate this point fully, the distinction between community and collectivity may be helpful. The former is constituted through what the

author calls “primary reciprocities” in which rules are self-enforced, that is, there is no need for a third party to intervene. *Community*, as defined here, then, refers to a group of persons who are drawn together by a sense of affective solidarity and meaningful participation in reciprocal exchanges within the group. *Collectivity* refers to a group of people who have decided to work together to achieve specific objectives. In such social entities, rigid cultural prescriptions do not hold sway over members, as they tend to in communities. Instead, group values are malleable and open to reorientation in response to changing circumstances and new opportunities. This distinction between community and collectivity bears some resemblance to Durkheim’s notions of mechanical and organic forms of solidarity. What matters most here, however, is the point that one prevails in local space where place and space have not been separated, whereas the other exists in distanced space and time. This point is important for understanding the relations between community and state in Africa, as indicated in Table 1.⁽³⁾ The relative strength of community in these countries is also attributable to the relatively weak penetration by capitalist relations of production. Trade was not unknown to Africans before the Europeans came, but it was the colonial powers that brought the world market to the region. The extent to which capitalist relations of production were introduced, however varied. Their presence were strongest wherever white settlers, by seizing or buying land, removed Africans from their community and forced them into new social collectivities. Elsewhere, Africans remained only marginally affected by the market. They increasingly traded in the market, but their base was still a homestead and family farm where a subsistence ethos prevailed. It is in this respect that the African economies at independence were first and foremost peasant economies over which state officials had only a limited control. (Hydén, 2006: 53–54)

According to Hydén’s analysis and typology, the Kenyan CBOs that the author has mentioned are such organizations straddling the line between collectivity and community. Their origin is not only by choice or by birthplace. Their objectives are not only specific, but also generalized goods. Their methods involve both voice and communal or personal loyalty to some extent, and the behavior of those involved in these organizations might be analyzed as half autonomous and half interdependent. Unfortunately, Hydén’s observation of those emerging trends in social development by African CBOs was rather pessimistic at the time; however, he did not completely deny their possibility. CBOs are necessary at least to

Table 1. Differences between community and collectivity.

Type	Origin	Objective	Method	Behavior
Collectivity	By choice	Achieve specific good	Voices	Autonomous
Community	By birth	Achieve generalized benefits	Loyalty	Interdependent

Source: Hydén (2006)

complement the insufficient public services of failed states. Moreover, although CBOs are still dependent on international NGOs and budgetarily vulnerable, they may be able to play the role of negotiator between externally-induced NGOs and internally-induced community service organizations in urbanizing African society. In Hydén's words, "None of these is especially well placed to contribute to the growth of a civic sphere and thus a true civic society. Yet, it is in these rather inhospitable circumstances that private and voluntary actors have tried to make progress" (Hydén, 2006: 161).

African CBOs Help Japanese Volunteers

In 2012, the author joined a JICA volunteer mission as an instructor for participatory development. It was a week-long program for Japanese volunteers who had been sent to eastern and southern African countries that had difficulties with the involvement of local beneficiaries in their activities. Around 30 volunteers working in various African countries, such as Kenya, Mozambique, Ethiopia, or Malawi, gathered for a week in Nairobi to join the training program. We contacted several local Kenyan CBOs to collaborate with us in this training program. The CBOs detailed their problems and formed working groups in collaboration with the Japanese volunteers to find solutions and devise action plans. From the perspective of the CBOs, this program provided a good opportunity to find practical solutions for problematic issues with help from various Japanese volunteers. However, the Japanese volunteers who were supported by the Kenyan CBOs were the ones that devised their own activities for international development. We can therefore see that African CBOs have recently been helping Japanese volunteers in terms of international development (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. Japanese volunteers and Kenyan CBOs in the field in 2012.

CULTURALLY TRACTABLE WAY OF EMPOWERMENT: CASE OF MALAWI

Malawi is a landlocked country in southeast Africa that was formerly known as Nyasaland. It is bordered by Zambia to the northwest, Tanzania to the northeast, and Mozambique to the east, south, and west. Malawi is over 118,000 km² in area with an estimated population of 18,091,575 (as of July 2016). Lake Malawi takes up about a third of Malawi's total area. The capital is Lilongwe, which is also Malawi's largest city, followed by Blantyre, Mzuzu, and the former capital, Zomba. The part of Africa now known as Malawi was settled by migrating Bantu groups around the tenth century AD. Centuries later, in 1891, the area was colonized by the British. In 1953, Malawi—then known as Nyasaland, a protectorate of the United Kingdom—became a protectorate within the semi-independent Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The Federation was dissolved in 1963 and in 1964, Nyasaland became an independent country and changed its name to Malawi. Upon gaining independence, the country became a totalitarian one-party state under the presidency of Hastings Banda, who remained president until 1994. Malawi has a democratic, multiparty government headed by an elected president (currently Arthur Peter Mutharika in 2019). Malawi is among the world's least-developed countries. The economy is heavily based on agriculture and has a largely rural population. The Malawian government depends heavily on outside aid to meet its development needs, although this need (along with the aid offered) has decreased since 2000. The Malawian government faces challenges in building and expanding its economy, improving education, health care, and environmental protections, and becoming financially independent amidst widespread unemployment. Since 2005, Malawi has developed several programs that focus on these issues, and the country's outlook appears to be improving, with improvements in the economy, education, and health care seen in 2007 and 2008.

The M Project

In this section, the author shows the achievements of small-scale rural development projects created by the Japan Overseas Cooperation Association (JOCA) in Malawi. JOCA is an NGO organized by former Japanese volunteers. Its principal aim is logistics or various types of support related to JICA's volunteer mission. However, it is also engaged in various cooperative projects of its own, such as the project in Malawi, which was officially named, "Malawi Farmer Self-sufficiency Aid Project for Better Livelihoods and the Self-Reliance of Farmers in Mzimba" (hereafter, M project). It was launched in 2005 with the aims of improving the livelihoods and systematically nurturing an attitude of self-help among the smallholder farmers in the country. In 2009, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed to fund the M project for a period of 3 years. The project does not involve the construction of facilities or the provision of materials. Rather, it aims to improve the livelihoods of farmers in the targeted areas through their own initiatives to introduce appropriate farming methods that make use of locally available resources, and to enhance communal activities. The third stage of the M project started in February 2014 and finally terminated in 2017.

Using the “farmer-to-farmer” methodology of JICA volunteers, the M project aimed to improve the livelihoods of farmers in targeted areas in northern Malawi. Initially, the M project involved only 586 households, or approximately 2,930 people, in 31 villages. However, in the second stage, the number of households increased to 1,830, or approximately 9,325 people. In its final stage, the total beneficiaries were 6,499 households, or approximately 32,495 people, in 113 villages.

Various Achievements of the M Project

The leading achievements of the M project were four-fold: improvements in upland maize production, the introduction and promotion of garlic as a product, the promotion of the “Goat Pass-on Programme,” and farmer empowerment.

The M project succeeded in increasing the average yield of maize by 10% from 2011 to 2012 in the target area. The farmers relied on the governmental Farm Inputs Subsidy Programme to purchase chemical fertilizer for upland maize. However, the M project recommended that the farmers diversify their cash income so that they could earn more money to buy fertilizer. At the same time, the M project disseminated ideas about applying manure and utilizing a planting method that was effective for fertilizing barren land for production.

Regarding the introduction of garlic, the M project tentatively provided 6.32 kg of garlic seeds to nine groups of farmers during the preceding period (2005–2009). Since then, garlic production has expanded to groups and individual farmers within the M project area as well as beyond. Farmers have found new market channels by employing improved marketing skills gained through marketing training. At the beginning of this trial around the year 2006, there was only about 6.32 kg of garlic with almost no producers in the area. However, by 2012, production had increased to 20 tons with 435 producers in the area, suggesting that garlic had become localized as a new crop to improve farmers’ incomes in the area (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. A village meeting on the marketing of garlies in Malawi, 2016.

The M project also involved the Goat Pass-on Programme, which promotes the raising of goats to increase income. The project initially provided 91 goats to the target farmers, who then passed the goats on and promoted the program using the following procedure:

- (1) Confirm the number of goats ready to be passed on
- (2) Select the candidate recipient groups
- (3) Conduct group dynamics training
- (4) Conduct goat-rearing training
- (5) Elect a group livestock committee
- (6) Inspect goat pens constructed by recipient households
- (7) Have the recipient group sign a memorandum of understanding
- (8) Have the recipient group receive the goats

Additionally, the M project noted important points for the effective management of this pass-on project:

- (1) Select initial groups that are well organized and will ensure the passing on of goats and continuation of the program
- (2) Ensure that three female goats are provided to the first household in the recipient group
- (3) Ensure that the first recipient household will pass on three female goats to the second recipient household and one goat to the group bank

Thus, the goats increased in number to 618 in the year 2012.

Culturally Tractable Way of Empowerment

Finally, the author focused on the M project's fourth-leading achievement, the culturally tractable way of empowerment. The M project divided this into four levels: individual, group, committee, and expanded chain. At the initial stage of the M project, the farmers' mindsets were, in general, passive and conservative. Most farmers depended on the assistance provided by extension workers, NGOs, and other external organizations. After carrying out the M project activities, the farmers' mindset became more proactive and innovative. Some farmers started actively sharing the farming skills and knowledge with other farmers; this is what was happened at the individual level. A similar change was also seen at the group level. Initially, many farmers were against sharing the gained information and did not realize the benefits of sharing skills and knowledge. As the M project proceeded, many farmers began enjoying benefits from group activities, and are now more capable of accomplishing bigger achievements than before. Moreover, the individually trained "key farmers" extended not only their internal group network, but also their group-to-group network. They also formed various committees to extend and manage their area-wide activities. The project views this expansion of activities as an autonomous chain. Thus, the empowerment of the farmers was the greatest achievement of the M project. The activities by the key farmers were

referred to by the farmers as the “JOCA club,” as the M project was organized by JOCA. As time passed, many JOCA clubs sprang up in the target area, regardless of whether they were recognized by the M project; this was the result of the key farmers’ creative activities.

The M project by JOCA was significant because it clarified an effective process of changing the mindset of the farmers toward becoming more self-reliant. Before the M project started, the farmers in the area were very reliant on aid. However, owing to the M project activities, they became very interested in seeking technologies and methods to achieve better yields, growing cash crops, studying marketing, and raising and breeding goats. In a real sense, they actually began to think and act on their own.

The farmers seemed to be inspired after they had earning their first income from garlic sales following three years of production. They began proactively studying garlic production techniques and extended their production scale. The M project also provided training programs on business management to help these garlic producers identify new markets for garlic and other crops. The farmers became more innovative in their thoughts and actions, attempting to source and begin growing new crops (e.g., strawberries, cucumbers, and ginger). However, the farmers sometimes failed to grow garlic on their first attempt. But afterwards, they became aware that the crop would be a reliable source of income.

Thus, the farmers became confident in their ability to improve their livelihoods on their own through the intervention of the M project, which trained them about farming using comparative methods and marketing, and through their participation in field tours and the Goat Pass-on Programme. The project intervened not only through technology transfers, but also by changing the mindset of the farmers. Various interventions were made depending on the farmers’ level of understanding. Even after they began to receive a significant cash income from the garlic they produced, the farmers continued diversifying their farm production to further stabilize their income.

The M project was a very successful project for empowering small-scale or family farmers to improve their livelihoods through their own efforts. However, the official evaluation by the donors or implementation side (i.e., the Japanese government), was not so kind. The specialists involved in evaluating the M project insisted on looking at quantitative results, such as improvements in income or crop product per ha, as hinted by the M project’s official report (JOCA, 2013).

Because the author served as the M project’s advisor, the author could observe that the farmers’ sense of empowerment to ask for specific outcomes or the evaluators’ need to be confident that change was happening required substantial time and effort. It is not realistic to expect such a drastic change in a few years. However, if we can describe more precisely what the M project did for the farmers and how they responded to the intervention on their own, we can realize that change is absolutely happening day-by-day, little-by-little, and that is what can be seen as farmers’ empowerment to become more self-reliant.

TREND OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Based on the examples of the three countries described in this article, we can see a stable trend of development in rural Africa. When the author began to be involved in this topic around the beginning of the 1990s, African countries, especially the rural areas within these countries, were still affected by the failure of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) through the initiative of the World Bank in the 1980s. Afterwards, when the author was involved in Nigerien rural development, the participatory approach was booming in the field.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, influenced by the microfinance revolution in South Asia and bolstered by the widespread use of cellular phones, the microfinance approach taken by ordinary citizens became extremely popular in rural African areas. Citizens forming of social organizations was a breakthrough for the rural population in terms of requesting projects or funds to improve their livelihood. The author observed such a breakthrough in Kenya around 2005–2007.

This was followed by the diffusion of the conditional cash transfer, which came to Africa after its boom in Latin America and Asia. Many African countries are trying hard to provide cash directly to the poor to eradicate poverty; however, the effects of this strategy remain unclear. The author was involved in a Malawian project around that time that took a rather contrary approach by trying to provide technology and knowledge rather than money. This approach is still necessary, in addition to providing money directly, for poverty reduction among family farmers in Africa.

Looking back at the approximately 25 years since development anthropology became popular in Japan, the trends in rural development policy in the developing world shifted from SAPs to Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS), the microfinance revolution, social welfare policy or Family Farming (Table 2).

Table 2. Trends of rural development in Africa.

Period of action	Country	Approach	Significant landmarks in the global effort to reduce poverty
Pre-1992		Governmental project	Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) (1980s)
1992–2001	Niger	Participatory approach	The Earth Summit (1992) Rural Rapid Appraisal to Participatory Learning and Action Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) (1999–) Millennium Development Goals (2000–2015)
2000–2007	Kenya	Citizens and social organizations	International Year of Microcredit (2005) Decentralization and improving service delivery
2005–2016	Malawi	Empowerment and self-reliance	Diffusion of Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) in Asia and Latin America (2001–)
2019–		Reconsideration on family farms	United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019–2028

CONCLUSION

In the influential book, *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution*, James Ferguson (2015) examined the rise of social welfare programs in southern Africa, in which states make cash payments to their low-income citizens. More than 30% of the South African population receives such payments. While many influential accounts of neoliberalism have seen only ever-growing social exclusion in the country, a new kind of inclusion as millions of poor citizens previously ignored or worse by the state have become direct beneficiaries of cash payments. Ferguson argues that the success of these programs in reducing poverty under conditions of mass unemployment provides an opportunity for rethinking contemporary capitalism and developing new forms of political mobilization. Displaying interest in an emerging “politics of distribution,” Ferguson shows how new demands for direct income payments (including so-called “basic income”) require us to reexamine the relation between production and distribution and to ask new questions about markets, livelihoods, labor, and the future of progressive politics in a rather anthropological way (Ferguson, 2015).

Although the basic income approach might be effective, significance of human empowerment and focusing on family farming is still increasing—that the author witnessed as a volunteer in Niger, as a researcher in Kenya, and as an advisor in Malawi—to realize viable and sustainable rural development by family farms in Africa. Notwithstanding global trends in development, rural development in Africa has characteristic dispositions, which place family farming as central unit. These involve the culturally embedded dynamics of learning, which we have examined through the Nigerien case; the cultural forms of organization, which we have observed through the Kenyan CBOs; and the culturally tractable way of empowerment, which we have observed through the Japanese rural development project in Malawi.

NOTES

- (1) This location map was created by obtaining duplicating permission from MIKUNI Publishing Co., Ltd. The author is grateful to the company.
- (2) All names of individuals are fictitious in this paper, except scholars or important figures in history.
- (3) Originally this table was No. 5 in Hydén’s book. However, the author adopted the number to this article.

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