

EDITORIAL NOTE

The articles contained in Volume 9. Number 2. of *PULA* were selected from among numerous presentations made at the 17th Southern African Universities Social Sciences Conference (SAUSSC), which was hosted by the University of Zimbabwe, at the Oasis Motel, from 5th to 9th December, 1994, in Harare, Zimbabwe. The selection of papers for publication was an extremely difficult task due to the number of excellent papers that were presented at the 1994 SAUSSC. We wish to take this opportunity to thank those whose papers appear in this volume for their cooperation. We would like to urge scholars to prepare equally excellent papers for presentation at the forthcoming 18th SAUSSC to be hosted by the University of Swaziland from 4th to 5th December, 1995.

The theme of the 17th SAUSSC was "Environment and Development in Southern Africa". The sub-themes included: Environmental Policies; Environmental Justice; Sustaining People and Nature; Family and Environment; Gender Population and the Environment; Health and the Environment; and Urban Environmental Problems. The critical nature of the environment in relation to development cannot be over emphasized. The theme of environment and development is about human action and survival. The theme is both topical and timely. It is discussed at a time when individual African countries are beginning to seriously examine their policies and development strategies in relation to the environment.

Until recently, the environment was not accorded serious attention in the development debate, the world over. The world's forests, soils, waters, air, organisms, etc., have been exploited in the name of development without due regard to the long-term effects of such exploitation. Countries throughout the world have launched development activities and programmes without consideration for their adverse effects on the environment or the negative long-term impact of such activities.

Southern African countries have experienced mass poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, etc. As a result, they have tended to conceptualize their development priorities in terms of economic growth. Economic growth has been perceived as the supreme objective that would bring about progressive reduction and eventual elimination of mass poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy disease and squalor. Economic growth, however, has often led to the uncontrolled exploitation of the environment, which has led to deforestation, soil erosion, pollution of water, air and soil.

While there has been some concern about the environmental effects of many development projects, there has been little attention paid to the relationship between developmental policies and resource depletion. But development need not be destructive. In stead, it must be sustainable. The catchphrase, "sustainable development" has been associated with economic growth since the debate on the environment and development began. Despite its many usages, sustainable development is associated with environmentally friendly development policies. The basic philosophy behind this concept is, simply, that present needs and aspirations should be met without necessarily compromising the abilities of future generations to fulfil their needs and aspirations. Secondly, it is imperative to maintain an acceptable relationship between the population and the economy of any given country.

The debate in this volume concerns development issues that relate to the environment. There is need for social scientists to search for environmentally friendly development policies and practices. While the Southern African region should act decisively to combat poverty, hunger, etc., the measures employed must reflect a concern for environmentally friendly, sustainable development.

The 17th SAUSSC could not have taken place without the financial support from the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with developing countries (SAREC), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Council for Development and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern Africa (OSSREA), and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We are immensely grateful to all of them for their support of the SAUSSC. We look forward to their continued encouragement and support.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the University of Zimbabwe and the SAUSSC local organising committee for hosting the conference and providing logistical support.

Finally, we wish to express our sincere thanks to the Editorial Board of *PULA: Botswana Journal of African Studies* for accepting to publish this selection of articles. Their willingness to assist the SAUSSC has been a source of tremendous inspiration and encouragement. We greatly appreciate this kind gesture and hope that this spirit of cooperation will continue and lead to further collaboration.

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