

TOPIC 05: POST INDEPENDENCE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN EAST AFRICA

Learning outcomes:

The learner should be able to;

- a. Understand the socio and economic challenges faced by the East African states after independence.

The various European states that passed on independence to African leaders

East Africa is composed of various countries including Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan and then democratic Republic of Congo.

They were formerly ruled by and eventually received their independence from the following former colonial masters.

COUNTRY	FORMER COLONIAL MASTER	YEAR	FIRST PRESIDENT
Uganda	Britain	1962	Kabaka Muteesa II
Kenya	Britain	1963	Jomo Kenyatta
Tanzania	Germany (Later Britain)	1961	Julius Nyerere
Democratic Republic of South Sudan	Britain	2011	John Garanga
The Democratic Republic of Congo	Belgium (later France)	1960	Joseph Kasavubu

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACED BY EAST AFRICAN COUNTRIES AFTER INDEPENDENCE

At the time of independence many East Africa states were optimistic about their countries' future. They believed that the people would enjoy the fruits of independence. As it was, they passed many laws and policies that could develop their people economically and socially. Unfortunately, they have continuously faced the challenges which include;

external debt burden

poverty

corruption

unemployment

power wrangles

Refugee crisis

famine among others.

THE PROBLEMS OF FAMINE AND FOOD CRISIS IN EAST AFRICA

Famine refers to extreme scarcity of food leading to hunger, starvation and subsequently death. This situation is ugly in East Africa to the extent that sometimes people die in big numbers. Though the region is blessed with abundant natural resources in terms of rainfall, rivers, swamps, lakes and ocean borders, people still lack what to eat.

Countries in East Africa that have faced severe hunger include Sudan, Uganda especially in Karamoja, Democratic Republic of Congo among others.

The following are the main causes of famine in East Africa:

High population rate in East Africa. This has led to decrease in food production due to limited or no land for agriculture which has led to increased death rates.

The unpredictable and unreliable rainfall in different parts of East Africa. That destroys crops in the fields through hailstones and the stored food is also washed away by the floods thus creating famine conditions.

Lack of storage facilities especially in rural villages where most food harvested is lost due to inadequate storage facilities which leads to famine and starvation.

The use of poor tools of production in the production of food whereby most farmers use hand hoes, digging sticks which can't generate a big harvest which has led to famine.

The poor transport network this is because food production is done in remote areas which lack good feeder roads which limits food exchange with neighbouring communities which has led to famine.

Political instabilities in East African states of Sudan, Uganda and Rwanda have caused famine in Africa. These civil wars interrupt food cultivation and other farm activities especially food distribution which have led to famine.

Pests like weevils and diseases which destroy crops and later leads to low yields have led to famine in East Africa.

Drought in Uganda especially the West and North of the country, Northern Kenya which has discouraged cultivation and reduced the population of cattle has also led to famine in East Africa.

Over dependence on local crop varieties and poor animal breeds has caused famine in some parts of East Africa. Cross breeds of animals and scientific methods of production are unknown in some localities leading to over dependence on the poor traditional crops and animal breeds hence affecting production output.

Traditional beliefs, taboos and cultural rigidities also limit the range of food produced in East Africa thus leading to famine.

Poverty amongst the East Africans has led to famine. The increasing poverty amongst Africans has forced many into selling off their land to new landlords who establish plantations of tea, others sell off their hard produced food to meet basic needs like health and education which has led to famine.

Poor methods of farming amongst the East Africans. These bad farming methods range from shifting cultivation to nomadic. However, with increasing population, land has become scarce implying many of such communities are at a risk of facing famine.

Pollution of water negatively affects the multiplication of fish. Water and land in East Africa especially near the industrial areas is polluted which risks those areas with famine due to limited access to quantity foods other than quality of foods.

Poor soils that cannot support agriculture unless improved through irrigation and use of manure leads to famine in East African region. This improvement needs money which the governments in the region lack.

The poor attitude of the East Africans towards agriculture as an occupation has led to famine. Many think agricultures are referred to as work for the uneducated.

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE FAMINE IN AFRICA

Land under food production should be expanded, East Africa still has large areas of land in the region and these include forests, swamps, and wasteland.

East African governments should design population policies that will reduce the gap between rapid population increase through encouraging people to use family planning methods.

Governments should provide farmers with improved seeds agricultural machinery and intermediate technology. Cross breeds should be extended to the pastoral areas so as to increase on the production of animal foods.

Small scale irrigation should be adopted to reduce the effect of drought on the crop performance.

Education should be carried out on how fertilizers and new seed varieties are used to avoid crop failure amongst farmers.

More emphasis should be put on growing food crops than the cash crops since some food crops like fruits can be sold for money besides providing food.

Corruption should be fought through establishing strict rules and also arrest corrupt people.

Creating water reservoirs

Food stores/granaries should be built.

Modern farming technologies

A SUMMARY OF THE EFFECTS OF FAMINE AND FOOD CRISIS

Famine globally affects people negatively. These negative effects among others include the following:

- It leads to starvation and death of the victims.
- Famine leads to malnutrition and other sickness.
- It's a source of poverty among the people who depend on agriculture as their source of livelihood.
- Famine corrodes the income level of the people.
- Its responsible for political instability.
- Famine negatively affects the level of production in a country.
- It is responsible for unemployment especially in rural settings.
- Famine can cause rural urban migration in search of food in town areas.
- Famine leads to poor standards of living.
- It leads to misery and suffering of the people.
- Famine reduces government revenue because it corrodes the tax base.
- It increases government's spending in an attempt to mitigate the food crisis.

THE REFUGEE CRISIS

Refugee are people who have been forced to leave their homes or countries. Such people can be internally displaced persons or refugees within their own country, either in camps or normal accommodation or those who have been forced to leave their countries or origin to settle in another country.

Problems associated with refugee crisis in Africa are:

Malnutrition due to lack of adequate food for both children and adults. This normally arises due to the inability of the people to engage themselves in meaningful agricultural activities.

There is general deterioration of people's standards of living due to lack of accessibility to medicine, shelter, food and other basic necessities of life. The standards of living of the people drop because people are not able to obtain the basic necessities of life.

Land pressure in the recipient country is another problem of refugee crisis in Africa. Wherever they are received, refugees cause land problems because they have to be settled on land in the recipient country.

Diseases

Over population

Famine

Civil wars

The Causes of Refugee Crisis in East Africa

Natural calamities like landslides and floods may lead to refugee crisis. Some people leave their areas of residence after such places have been divested by landslides, earthquakes and floods.

Oppressive and autocratic regimes in East Africa have created refugee problems in Africa. There are autocratic regimes in the region characterized by abuse of human rights, censoring the press and detaining advocates for democratic governance.

The outbreak of border and inter-state conflicts have caused refugee crisis in Africa for example the clashes between Uganda and Tanzania over the Kagera border displaced some people.

The constant civil wars for example the long civil wars in Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Uganda, 1981 – 1986, Rwanda, 1990 – 1994 and Burundi have forced many people to become refugees internally or in neighbouring countries.

Famine due to the climatic conditions. During such period thousands of nationals leave their homes and flee to neighbouring countries or in camps inside their countries where relief organisations provide them with food.

The religious persecutions have led to refugee crisis in East Africa. For instance, the religious conflicts between Khartoum and South Sudan led to an influx of refugees into Uganda.

The tribal conflicts over grazing land, water and political dominance have triggered clashes which have in turn forced people to leave their homes. For instance, the clashes between the Kikuyu and the Kalengin, the Luo Kalengin, the Kikuyu and Luo after the December 2007 elections in Kenya forced many survivors to become refugees within Kenya.

The oppressive cultural practices for example female genital mutilation (female circumcision) among the Sebei which forces many girls to flee before it is done.

The occurrence of military coups explains the phenomenon of refugee crisis in East Africa. In some East African States, there have been coups that were accompanied by persecution of those who have been in the disposed governments. This pushed such people out of their homes or countries.

The desire to flee from justice is responsible for refugee crisis in East Africa. Some East African individuals commit crimes in their home countries and seek refugee status outside the country.

The desire to work abroad is another cause of refugee crisis in Africa. Many young Africans leave their countries for Europe, Australia and the USA as refugees in order to be allowed to live and work in those countries. Many of these end up in camps before they can be given asylum status. These in essence are referred to as economic refugees.

The Effects of Africa's Refugee Crisis

Refugee crisis has led to the occurrences of deaths of refugees. Thousands of refugees lose their lives due to the unhealthy conditions in refugee camps.

It has led to famine because people in refugee camps do not carry out farming and rely on relief aid for food.

Refugee crisis has led to the construction of the refugee camps. Due to the need to provide shelter for the refugee, governments and the United Nations have constructed refugee camps.

The refugees have suffered from rampant sexual abuse. While in camps, refugees are defenceless against rape, defilement, sodomy and incest. In Eastern Congo, female refugees are constantly raped and young girls defiled.

The loss of national identity is another impact of the refugee problem. When some refugees mix in the population of the host countries, they are not readily accepted by the society as nationals. At the same time, they lose touch with their home countries.

The refugee problem separates relatives and splits families. Thousands of people flee in desperately during rebel attacks and do not mind where their relatives or family members live.

The refugee problem has provided recruits for rebels. Many rebel groups in Africa recruit refugees convincing them that it is the only option for them to return home.

The wide spread poverty among the refugees is another impact. Millions of refugees do not carry out productive activities and become very poor.

The creation of numerous non-government bodies has resulted of the refugee crisis. A number of NGOs have been formed across East Africa that aim at saving children, women,

victims of rape, trauma and defilement. There are widespread in Uganda, Congo, Sudan and Burundi.

EXTERNAL DEBT BURDEN IN EAST AFRICA

With the desire to provide adequate education and health services and put in place capital projects like infrastructure, leaders resorted to massive borrowing from the foreign countries and organisation with high interest rates. Today all East Africa countries have huge domestic and debts and paying back is now a burden to their economies

An external debt refers to money borrowed from a source outside the country.

WHY THE EXTERNAL DEBT BURDEN IS INCREASING

The increasing debt is due to the high levels of borrowing for the following reasons;

The need to develop infrastructure like roads, railways, energy facilities lead the external borrowing for example in the recent past the government of Uganda borrowed 1.2 million dollars from World Bank to finance the electricity access scale up project aimed at increasing access to electricity.

The need to finance industrialization related to economic growth through capital investment leads to external borrowing.

Natural disasters like floods, diseases like Covid and Ebola, governments in order to solve the unexpected calamities will resort to external borrowing.

Large scale lending by westerner banks leads to external borrowing.

Sometimes countries borrow to pay off their outstanding loans poor debt management, corruption, embezzlement of money, mismanagement of loans which are used for consumption of goods rather than productive investment also explains the increasing external debt burden

THE EFFECTS OF THE EXTERNAL DEBT BURDEN ON THE EAST AFRICAN COUNTRIES

It undermines the sovereignty and independence of the recipient country as they dictate political policies on the borrower for example IMF (International Monetary Fund) gives money with conditions.

It leads to high-cost borrowing because in some cases the interest rate on the loans is high which increases the rate of defaulting e.g. Uganda's loans from the Chinese Exim bank have high interest rate compared to the loans from IMF.

Public external debt is a burden to the future generation. That is, when government borrows the present generation escapes the burden of repayment and refers it to the next generation.

It makes economies vulnerable to sudden stops in capital flows and increases capital outflows which reduces funds for investment.

Loan payment reduces domestic savings and investment and this reduces economic growth instead of increasing growth and development.

It has led to increased number of foreigners into the country who come as expatriates for example Chinese and Indians due to conditions given by borrowers.

It leads to poverty indirectly by reducing government resources that are available for poverty alleviation as it is used to pay back the loans.

External debts can make economies less stable and underdeveloped. This is because servicing debts moves revenue away from productive investments like infrastructure.

Excessive debt can undermine economic performance and this limits government ability to implement reforms and respond to problems.

There is reduced social spending of the heavily indebted poor countries which leads to higher rates of infant mortality, malnutrition, diseases, illiteracy.

It can hamper country's ability to invest in their economic future for example infrastructure, education, health as their limited revenue goes to servicing loans.

It leads to erosion of cultural values in the country as they are forced to comply with the conditions attached yet some clash with their values. This can lead to moral decay.

Debt servicing denies nationals of essential goods and services that they need. This is because government is forced to reduce its expenditure for the provision of such services in order to raise money for servicing the debt.

Sometimes funds are misallocated due to corruption and not used for the intended purposes and as such the citizens suffer as the country repays loans that were spent on unproductive investment.

THE SOLUTIONS TO INCREASED EXTERNAL DEBT BURDEN IN EAST AFRICA

Negotiate an agreement with the people you owe money to change debts and amounts of your payments based on your budget.

Reduce unnecessary spending for example reduce foreign trips, workshops and foreign treatments and save money for payment of debts.

Taxes should be raised to pay for the expenditures, tax holidays to foreign investors should be removed to increase government revenue and reduce the need for borrowing.

Government expenditure should be diverted to sectors which boost job growth, increase consumer spending which can increase government revenue.

Government should undertake growth-oriented reforms that is priority should be given to only projects that have potential to unlock Uganda's productivity challenges.

The government should reduce rate of borrowing that is there should be a balance between borrowing and debt servicing.

Interest rates on loans should be lowered to make it easier for individuals and businesses to borrow money. Through these jobs are create, with increase tax revenue for debt financing.

The government should fight corruption especially with those who mismanage foreign loans. Proper accountability of the debts to improve the behaviour of borrowers should be followed.

The East African community should be strengthened to ensure that the member countries help one another to solve funding challenges instead of borrowing externally.

Instead of borrowing externally which comes with high interest rates that affect the country's growth, the country can opt for domestic borrowing for example from the local banks, NSSF. National Social Security Fund.