
Beyond Approaches and Models: Reflections on Rights and Social Movements in Kenya, Haiti and the Philippines

Mwambi Mwasaru*

1 Introduction

These reflections arise from two related concerns. First, the worsening conditions of poverty in poor countries despite numerous development projects by governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) aimed at improving lives of poor people. Second, the phenomenon of parallelism (or even hostility) between development and human rights programmes, at least in Kenya. The core questions I reflect upon here are: what possible strategies for change lie beyond the formal socio-economic approaches and models used in official poverty reduction programmes? What can “rights approaches” offer and what can be learned from the emergence of social movements for rights in the struggle against poverty? My reflections are based upon study visits to Haiti and the Philippines and on the experience of Kenya, with a focus on the relationship between struggles for social reforms, human rights and the fight against poverty.

In an effort to strike a balance between description and reflection in limited space, my observations are organised into three sections. First, a brief account is provided of the evolution and role of rights struggles and social movements in Kenya, Haiti and the Philippines. Second, I share a theoretical framework based on the notion of competing paradigms, exploring the role of social movements in relation to mainstream development and human rights programmes. In the third section, I conclude with a summary of significant lessons, including my personal reflections on poverty and its solutions.

2 Rights and social movements in Kenya, Haiti and the Philippines

2.1 Kenya: human rights and the fight against poverty

Community perspectives on human rights

The human rights discourse in Kenya is still limited to some sections of the Kenyan middle class and the international community. However, the majority of Kenyans continue to fight for their rights or entitlements on the basis of social justice perceptions ingrained in their socio-economic and political history. This study revealed that peasants in the rural areas and slum dwellers in the urban areas have a holistic perception of rights or entitlements. While most are unfamiliar with the human rights jargon, they are very clear about their entitlements and the injustices committed against them by state agents often hired by powerful non-state actors. For people at the community level struggling against injustice, human rights made sense when they heard that *the law of all nations in the world* was supporting them. They understood the language of human rights in the context of social justice.

The New World Order and human rights language in Kenya

The human rights discourse in Kenya at the beginning of the 1990s provided the nexus or a meeting point between Western powers and the national forces of resistance demanding reforms, mainly in the sphere of civil and political rights. Interestingly, hitherto enemies became allies in the fight against a dictatorial and corrupt post-colonial regime. Before the fall of

the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Eastern Europe during the mid-1980s, resistance forces in Kenya were classified as 'subversive communist elements' by Western powers that supported and nurtured dictatorships in Kenya and the East Africa region to create buffer states against Communism. However, in the New World Order, these forces have been "united" through the language of human rights, to address the problem of decadent post-colonial dictatorships. The civil and political rights tradition provided the common vocabulary and framework to fight the dictatorship of the ruling party, Kenya African National Union (KANU).

A pro-democracy movement and illusive changes

The human rights discourse came into the public domain in Kenya in the early 1990s as Kenyans battled with the ruling party, KANU, to remove a constitutional clause that had established a one-party state in 1982 and barred multiparty politics in Kenya for an indefinite period. The notorious Section 2A was removed in December 1991 when the KANU regime succumbed to internal pressure and international opinion and the political floodgates were opened. By the second half of the 1990s, a middle class-propelled human rights movement became the driving force of a pro-democracy movement that fought the culture of one-party rule and, more importantly, demanded Constitutional reform.¹ This movement helped the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) to overthrow KANU in the General Election of December 2002, breaking KANU's uninterrupted rule since independence in 1963.

However, Kenyans soon realised that the dictatorial machine of KANU remained essentially in place even after the fall of the KANU regime. The Constitution Review process could not move as quickly as Kenyans had hoped because it got entangled in a web of partisan interests at the expense of national interests. Meanwhile, corruption in the corridors of power had continued unabated defying populist rhetoric and pre-election promises on zero tolerance to corruption. As mega financial scandals become public knowledge, poverty continued to erode the capacity of the majority to maintain decent livelihoods and to safeguard their personal and human dignity. Nothing changed in terms of systemic reforms. Therefore, the problem of poverty was essentially unaddressed.

However, some would argue that the fall of the KANU dictatorship has created a new set of circumstances that could take the process of social and political reforms to a further stage. For example, there are definite improvements with respect to free speech, freedom of the press, and impunity concerning violations of civil and political rights such as detention without trial and torture of suspects in police custody. The same people would argue further that there are elements of political goodwill in the current NARC regime that could link up with progressive forces in civil society and elsewhere to push for realistic reforms in government and the political system. For these hopeful Kenyans, the question is: how are these gains to be consolidated and protected against forces that wish to claw them back, and to reduce rather than increase the political space?

Craving for a new type of popular movement

Many human rights groups that flourished during the height of the pro-democracy era in the second half of the 1990s are still caught up in the operational framework of civil and political rights and they are encouraged to operate in the same framework because there are still a lot of violations in a system that is still basically dictatorial. However, others are arguing that the second phase of struggle for human rights is in the terrain of economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights. In their perspective, civil and political rights are tackled even more fundamentally through issues in the domain of ESC rights. The emphasis is on a holistic approach, recognising that rights are integrated and indivisible. Issues of economic, social and cultural rights simply provide a starting point of a people-driven advocacy for rights in their entirety.

The direction towards ESC rights is providing an opportunity for dialogue between human rights programmes and conventional socio-economic development programmes. This space for dialogue is opening as development groups and NGOs recognise that poverty cannot be reduced solely through programmes of people's participation, better management practices in small-scale enterprises, improved public service infrastructure or appropriate technology for increased production of goods and services. Emphasis on rights approaches is growing with a message that socio-economic development should seriously take into account issues of institutionalised power relations

in order to unlock the reality of competing interests and to confront the root causes of poverty.

While struggles for civil and political rights in the early 1990s triggered a pro-democracy movement inspired largely by liberal democracy ideals, the drive for ESC rights does not yet have the advantage of a *movement medium* that can propel its demands beyond programmes. Alternatively, the question is whether or not the pro-democracy movement of the 1990s has the steam, scope and capacity to push the emerging agenda on ESC rights. Probably what is needed is a new wave of social movement inspired by social justice in the same way that liberal democracy inspired the pro-democracy movement of the 1990s to fight dictatorship in a one-party state.

The need for a movement dimension is critical if programmes on ESC rights are going to have any impact in respect to systemic reforms that realistically address the problem of poverty. The drive or punch of a popular movement is crucial especially given the fact that ESC rights lack legal instruments of enforcement, unlike civil and political rights. United Nations administrative mechanisms for monitoring ESC rights are basically incapable of pushing nation states to fulfill their obligations in respect to ESC rights. This leaves enforcement to political forces, including pressure groups with the capacity to lobby the corridors of power. The medium for such political and cultural forces that can potentially push the government of the day to respond on issues of ESC rights is a popular movement for social justice. But what does it take to initiate or consolidate forces that translate into a movement for social justice? This is the core question that human rights activists, reformers and all those committed to fight poverty from the roots in Kenya may face with time.

2.2 Haiti: human rights and the spirit of unbeatable resistance

Since my visit to Haiti in March 2003, President Aristide has been removed from power. However, the essence of the situation I describe following my experience there remains unchanged. The state of human rights in Haiti is pathetic. Apart from specific acts of violation of human rights by the state and non-state agencies, the prevailing political and economic conditions constitute a permanent violation of human rights.

There are few human rights NGOs in Haiti. The best known is the National Coalition of Haitian Rights (NCHR). Given the deteriorating state of security and endemic conditions of lawlessness, human rights NGOs like NCHR have concentrated their efforts on monitoring and denouncing violations, especially by the State. Although 80 per cent of the population lives under the poverty line, the human rights NGOs do not give any significant attention to issues of economic and social injustice embedded in the socio-economic and political fabric of the nation.

On the other hand, however, Haiti is teeming with “development” NGOs, both local and international. Hardly any of these NGOs are addressing real development issues in Haiti. Most are part of the “international aid phenomenon” focusing on relief and welfare programmes funded by a variety of foreign agencies and interests ranging from Central Intelligence Agency schemes to evangelical missions of Christian fundamentalist churches in North America. Therefore, neither the human rights NGOs nor the mainstream development NGOs are addressing underlying issues of economic and social injustice – the root causes of poverty and prevailing conditions of political turmoil.

Nonetheless, the people of Haiti continue to resist and fight back with a spirit of defiance and hope of victory over the forces that perpetuate injustice and humiliation. This spirit dates back to the era of slavery and the successful revolt against the French colonial administration resulting in the birth of the Independent Republic of Haiti in 1804 (James 1989). The spirit and culture of resistance and continual struggle finds expression in some local NGOs like Program for Alternative Justice (PAJ) that cannot be easily classified² as human rights NGOs. Similarly, PAJ neither claims to be a human rights NGO nor a development NGO.

PAJ is working with grassroots groups and organisations in specific struggles for social justice with short-term, mid-term and long-term objectives. Their vision is to rebuild the popular movement that is a medium of a protracted people’s struggle against local and foreign domination and finally realise (through successive victories by the popular movement) a democratic society that cares for justice from the people’s viewpoint. Like PAJ, the Program for Alternative Development (PAPDA), is working with grassroots groups to promote development from a people’s viewpoint.

Haitians in the diaspora have responded to the situation in their country by launching vigorous campaigns to “name and shame” the USA and other powers in the region for their role and responsibility for the horrific conditions of human suffering in Haiti. So the embers of resistance are still burning both at home and abroad. The conditions that would enable those embers to translate into a vibrant movement for another round of struggle for people’s emancipation are apparently lacking at the moment. So what is the way forward? This is the question I put to the civil society leaders I met in Haiti.³

There is no short cut to changing the current situation in Haiti. The brick-by-brick building of the popular movement must continue. (Freud Jean, PAJ)³

In Haiti, the backbone of the popular movement has been and continues to be the peasantry, who form 70 per cent of the population. The peasant-based movement has four allies who, unfortunately, are currently very weak. These are: the working class, the academia (students and progressive lecturers), the Catholic Church and the political parties.

Lessons from the past and vision for the future

So what is the way forward for the popular movement and the emancipation of Haiti? Rights activists like Freud Jean are optimistic. First, the task of nurturing seeds of democracy through grassroots organisations is currently the principal challenge they see. Activists involved in a given locality must figure out what “nurturing” means in terms of activities that are appropriate in their specific contexts. Whatever the activities, the aim is to create or support processes through which the values and practice of democracy are experienced within those groups and organisations. It is the vibrant democratic experience in these groups and organisations that keep alive the embers from which a democratic popular movement will emerge when conditions become ripe.

Second and most importantly, rights movements are guided by lessons from the long history of struggle by Haitian people and especially from the experience of removing the Duvalier dictatorship. People must not only remove dictatorship but they must also participate in the creation and setting up of new governance structures and democratic institutions that are rooted in the people’s popular

movement and struggles. Only then can the state apparatus reflect and respect the will of the people. Only then can people identify with the state and confidently demand its accountability to them. Only then will that state, supported by its people through the popular movement, have, or be able to wield, the power to deal with foreign powers and interests in a manner that the interests of the nation and its people are advanced.

The popular movement, towards the end of the Duvalier dictatorship, had grown to a point where it was on the verge of bringing the dictatorship to its knees and moving into the stage where the movement could actively participate in the creation of instruments of governance and the setting up of democratic institutions rooted in the popular movement. Through that process the movement would have categorically rejected the model of governance through the “strong-man personality” allied to foreign powers, seen as similar to the 1804 revolution.

American imperialism, however, denied Haitians that opportunity by taking the initiative to remove Duvalier from power and thus removing conditions that would have helped the process of maturity by the popular movement through defeating the dictatorship and going into the stage of negotiating a new Constitution from a position of strength. The Constitution of 1987 was negotiated by factions of the ruling elite without participation of the popular movement. The people initially rejected it. They had to be persuaded to accept it by making some adjustments, such as introducing the clause that barred the participation of previous dictators in Government for a period of ten years. Although the people finally accepted the Constitution, they have never identified themselves with it because they did not participate in its development. Therefore, this Constitution and the entire social order as it is today cannot deliver justice to the Haitian people.

Alternative justice (justice from the viewpoint of the people) can be attained only in a society whose state institutions and all democratic institutions have been developed through a popular movement’s victory over dictatorship at various stages of struggle by masses of the people for a just society. For the Haitian people as a nation, that struggle began in 1804 when French colonialism was overthrown and the Haitian nation was born out of a popular movement against slavery and colonialism.⁴

2.3 The Philippines: features and challenges of a vibrant social movement

Human rights NGOs and integrated rights approach

As in all situations of struggle against dictatorships, human rights work in the Philippines during the Marshal Law era was limited to monitoring and documentation of violations. Reporting and publicity was done through Task Force Detainees (TFD), a programme of the Catholic Church formed in 1974 to defend the rights of political detainees. Later in the early 1980s a joint programme of Christian churches in the Philippines – Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace (EMJP) – was formed and lent support to TFD. The Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) was also formed during the Marshal Law period by human rights lawyers from the University of the Philippines. Similarly, MABIN – a prominent anti-Marcos lawyers group – was formed and named after a patriotic Filipino hero (Mabin), who gallantly fought against the Spaniards.

On the whole, human rights work during the Marshal Law period remained thin, though significant. However, soon after the fall of Marcos and the subsequent political space, the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA) was formed in 1986 as a nationwide organisation to consolidate human rights work begun during Marshal Law. PAHRA formed the Philippine Human Rights Information Center (PhilRights) in 1991, to enhance research on human rights issues.

Like all civic organisations in the social movement for change, human rights organisations also felt the impact of the 1992 radical split within the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) into “RA” and “RJ” camps.⁵ PAHRA split up along these camps in 1994 (Lopez-Wui 2003: 11). The human rights groups (KARAPATAN) that remained with the CPP hardliners in the “RA” camp took the position of “selective human rights” approach that targets only the state as a violator of human rights. The human rights groups that joined the “RJ” camp underlined the universality of human rights and took the position that holds accountable all violators of human rights – state and non-state. Given the purge within the CPP following the split, the “RJ” faction is holding the CPP leadership accountable for human rights violations ranging from torture to murder and involuntary disappearance.

The human rights organisations associated with the social democratic tradition of the progressive wing

of the Catholic Church did not have the same impact caused by the split within the CPP. However, since the said split affected the entire popular movement, these groups also experienced upheavals in terms of collapsing alliances and coalitions. Therefore, they were also thrown into a state of rethinking strategy, re-organisation and building new alliances.

Except for the “RA” camp, human rights organisations in the Philippines are broadening the scope of human rights in order to promote integrated rights approaches and practice. Human rights organisations are building alliances with development NGOs and grassroots groups and organisations to develop and implement rights approaches to basic needs struggles. For example, PhilRights (the research arm of PAHRA) has undertaken a major research project to work with grassroots organisations to develop monitoring criteria and performance indicators for assessing progress in economic, social and cultural rights. This project was seen as crucial in the light of the fact that, unlike in the case of the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights does not provide instruments for legal enforcement of those rights. Furthermore, there are no criteria for holding the state or non-state actors accountable for non-compliance. These circumstances leave ESC rights in limbo. Therefore, by creating grassroots-based standards and indicators, the human rights movement in the Philippines would kick off a process of debating and lobbying for the adoption of standards by national and international bureaucracies. In addition, ‘these standards and indicators could provide clear basis for human rights advocacy and lobby work and could enhance the justiciability of these rights’, according to Enrique Torres (PhilRights 2002).

Citizenship, participation in politics and organisational self-autonomy

The popular movement in the Philippines is thoroughly political. People’s organisations, NGOs and other civic organisations form alliances for political change on the basis of the common bond of citizenship. Although other criteria such as nature of the issue, class, ideological leanings and political party affiliation do play a significant role in such alliances, no Filipino organisation will purport to operate outside the realm of politics. Participation in politics is inherent in citizenship and, indeed, in being human.

The traditional tendency (especially before the 1992 crisis) by major ideological centres, the CPP and the Catholic Church, was to control and demand loyalty from popular organisations, supposedly affiliated to them. This was met with resistance by a popular movement that was growing deeply democratic and pluralistic. Today, the control tendency is virtually gone except for the “RA” hardliners in the CPP. Organisational self-autonomy seems to be a desired status and value in the process of building and negotiating alliances and coalitions for political action. Even zealous members of a given political party are under pressure (sometimes self-imposed discipline) to draw a line between the party and the popular organisations they happen to lead, or work in.⁶ The message seems clear: leadership of a political party, popular organisation, NGO or even an individual person will be effective and respected through example, persuasion and democratic practice. Authoritarianism and dogma have no place.

Advocacy

Advocacy for political reforms in the Philippines is as old as the social movement itself and several key characteristics are apparent. The forging of solid horizontal and vertical alliances is a major mark of the Filipino social movement and its related advocacy campaigns. Based on specific issues of great concern to a given social sector and the public at large, alliances grow, change, die or transform into greater networks for social change, rather than remaining rigid. Whatever the fate of specific alliances, the bottom line is they build the social movement and the momentum for change.

Another mark of Filipino advocacy is the shift (especially after the fall of Marcos in 1986) from resistance and protest to constructive engagement with government. An era of hostility and bitterness has changed to one of constructive criticism, proposing alternatives, pushing for more political space for civil society and demanding internationally accepted standards of accountability for democratic governance and human rights protection by the state and non-state actors in all sectors of society.

Another mark is the “*bibingka* strategy”.⁷ Engaging the government through popular pressure (fire from below) and use of available spaces in government bureaucracy such as positive law/policy and progressive individuals in key positions (fire from above) to pursue stated objectives is a new form of advocacy within the dimension of

constructive engagement with government. The “*bibingka* strategy” takes advantage of spaces within a reformist government to build capacity and motivation in the popular movement through achievement of concrete benefits while pushing for more and more reforms.

3 Beyond approaches and models: a movement for social justice

The foregoing examples from Kenya, Haiti and the Philippines raise important questions about the role of social movements in realising human rights; especially those rights implicit in efforts to overcome poverty and meet basic social and economic needs, which have traditionally been the domain of humanitarian relief and development organisations. In this section, a theoretical framework is offered for considering these challenges.

3.1 Historical responses to the problem of poverty

There are basically two ways of responding to poverty and human suffering caused by unjust economic and political systems. The first type is composed of responses that take place within the space of the dominant paradigm; the *status quo* with its economic, political and cultural systems. These responses include the various “development” models that have been applied in countries of the South during both the colonial era and the post-independence period. They include the service delivery or welfare model and the urban-based infrastructure development model with a strong dimension of technical assistance from industrialised countries. Charity and relief aid programmes are a dominant feature in such “development” models. The common denominator in all these models is the fact that they do not question the *status quo* wherein lie the root causes of poverty. They are basically coping mechanisms that in fact protect and maintain the *status quo*.

The second type is composed of responses that are rooted in the space of a resistance paradigm. In specific situations, such responses may take the form of protest, defiance, memoranda and other forms of advocacy focused on specific issues. The bottom line for these responses is the fact that they question the *status quo* and seek or wish to change the arrangement of power relations and alignment that maintain the *status quo*. Their aim is to tackle the problem at hand, such as poverty, from its roots.

Moving beyond specific situations, these responses seek to bring about larger, systemic reforms. These struggles take place at two levels or fronts. One is in the space of the dominant paradigm. The other is in the space of the resistance paradigm; the framework in which economic, political and cultural forces of resistance operate.

Organised forms of resistance in the space of the dominant paradigm are faced with serious contradictions, especially during moments of crisis. As organisations, they would normally be registered according to legal and administrative requirements set by the same *status quo* they are questioning. They have to balance between respect for “rule of law” (sometimes including bad or even immoral laws) on the one hand and pursuit of justice on the other. Justice being bigger than law, pursuit of justice may sometimes lead such organisations to operate even outside the existing legal framework and, thus, risk their own survival within the *status quo*. In order to survive, therefore, these organisations must operate in the space of the dominant paradigm as a “loyal opposition”.

In this respect, most human rights programmes, as in the case of mainstream development programmes, have no option but to operate in the space of the dominant paradigm. As entities officially registered under relevant laws of the state and officially funded by the state or registered non-state agencies, these programmes or organisations are subjected to the cultural norms of the dominant paradigm. They may be critical of the *status quo* in respect to the fight against poverty but the scope of their operations is limited to the space of “loyal opposition”. Whatever approaches or models they develop to address poverty (no matter how radical they may be), in order to intervene effectively, such approaches and models will still be required to operate within the official space. So what are the forces of change beyond these formal models and approaches?

3.2 Place and role of a movement for social justice

A social movement rooted in the politics and culture of resistance⁸ is the answer suggested by evidence from the history of social reforms in different countries and different epochs in the same country. Major social reforms in the world take place in the context of powerful social movements driven by political and cultural forces informed by ordinary people’s perceptions of justice and right or

entitlement. While a social movement may be ignited by activities of “loyal opposition” organisations, it operates beyond the space of the dominant paradigm. A pro-people social movement and, especially a popular movement for social justice, is rooted in the space of the resistance paradigm. Driven by the politics and culture of resistance, a popular movement enjoys the advantage of using all possible space within the dominant paradigm and yet goes beyond it to mobilise forces of the resistance paradigm, some of which may be outlawed or illegitimated within the dominant space. Consequently, systemic reforms are possible only through the medium of a social movement.

Routine activities or programmes of government, civil society or even political parties cannot cause systemic changes alone, no matter how intensive. Since the root causes of poverty are systemic, conventional development approaches and models are incapable of dealing with them. This explains the limitations of charity or humanitarian assistance by often well-meaning actors and institutions in the dominant paradigm at global, national and even local level. However, such conventional approaches and models may contribute towards tackling the problem of poverty if they create conditions that support or lead to the generation of a social movement. A social movement is flexible, fluid and generally un-institutionalised. Yet, as seen in the case studies of the Philippines and Haiti, a social movement needs sources or fountains of inspiration and replenishment from formal institutions. Historical evidence indicates that there is a symbiotic linkage between a social movement as a medium of struggle for systemic reforms and established institutions or organisations that are rooted in the resistance paradigm, but which operate from within the *status quo* as dissenting voices of a “loyal opposition”.

3.3 The reality of competing paradigms⁹

Historically, domination provokes resistance. With time, organised resistance fights back and thus provokes further action from the dominant forces. Finally, we get the reality of competing paradigms; the dominant and resistance paradigms in continual competition over the economic, political or cultural interests of actors in each paradigm. Within these competing paradigms, social movements can help to transform formal, institutionalised approaches and models to socio-economic development.

Approaches or models are instruments developed for use to advance interests of actors within a given paradigm. The political viewpoint and underlying ideology behind given approaches and models reflect interests and aspirations of the paradigm in which they were developed. However, historical evidence indicates that approaches and models can be appropriated from the original paradigm to the opposing paradigm. If that happens, it follows that the political viewpoint and ideology of the original paradigm are replaced by the political viewpoint and ideology from the opposing paradigm. Given the threat or danger of appropriation, approaches and models as instruments in a social process should be subjected to continual critique within the context of competing paradigms.

A popular movement for social justice provides the litmus paper that is used to test approaches and models in order to assess their appropriateness as instruments of struggle within the resistance paradigm. It is also the same popular movement that mediates the process of appropriation of specific instruments from the dominant paradigm to the resistance paradigm, if there is need to do so.

4 Conclusion

Poverty is a product of history. Through historical struggles over economic, political and cultural interests, conditions of injustice have been created, institutionalised and maintained through dynamic and complex alliances between major interests and power blocks in a given social setting such as a nation-state, a region and the global social order. The resulting *status quo*, especially in the poor countries of the world, has been characterised by dehumanising and deteriorating conditions of poverty. Poverty is therefore a symptom of institutionalised injustice rooted not only within a nation-state but also in a world order driven by market forces and the geopolitical interests of superpowers.

Consequently, the fight against poverty is in fact a fight for a new society in a given nation-state and in the world as a whole. Systemic reforms informed by a deep sense of social justice constitute the means through which such society or world social order is created. Indeed, the problem of poverty can only be addressed through systemic reforms in a struggle that is complex, protracted and embedded in social

movements. There is no quick fix. This is the message emerging from the experience of social movements and human rights struggles in Kenya, Haiti and the Philippines.

Major social reforms take place in the context of powerful social movements driven by political and cultural forces informed by ordinary people's perceptions of justice, rights and entitlements. There is a need to explore the role of social movements as forces within competing paradigms, helping to challenge and transform institutionalised approaches and models of socio-economic development. However, since planning and practice are inevitably influenced by given perspectives, there is need to continually critique any stated or unstated model or approach.

The potential role and effectiveness of the human rights discourse or movement in fighting poverty has yet to be fully tested and assessed. The same is true for the rights-based approach, which is an aspect of the international human rights movement.

Evidence from Kenya, Haiti and the Philippines suggests that the growing human rights movement can be a significant force in the fight against poverty if it generates a movement inspired by social justice and capable of creating and recreating criteria for an ongoing critique of approaches and operational models for socio-economic development and social reform. Such a vibrant social movement derives nourishment from cultural and ideological fountains such as religious institutions, educational centres and political parties. For example, Voodoo cultural festivals and the Catholic Church have played this role in Haiti, and the Communist Party, the Catholic Church and universities have been instrumental in the Philippines. In the case of the pro-democracy movement in Kenya, however, such cultural or ideological fountains are not very obvious.

The worsening conditions of poverty in poor countries of the world are likely to continue unabated, despite numerous development projects by governments and NGOs aimed at improving the lives of poor people. The hope for change lies with a worldwide popular movement for rights and social justice that operates in the space of the dominant paradigm but rooted in the resistance paradigm. Such is the movement that can facilitate systemic reforms and create a new society or social order in which the root causes of poverty can be dealt with realistically and effectively.

Notes

* This article was written as the result of a sabbatical leave from my work as a development/human rights activist, during which I explored the role and emergence of human rights movements in the struggles against poverty in Kenya, Haiti and the Philippines. My reflections were further enriched by taking part in the 'Linking Rights and Participation Research Programme' at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex and by my time as a Visiting Fellow at the 'Human Rights Program' of Harvard University Law School.

1. For further reading on the middle class-led pro-democracy movement, see Mutunga (1999).
2. Some prominent people within the human rights circles held the opinion that organisations like PAJ could not be classified as, or put under the category of, human rights organisations. For them, the likes of PAJ were political lobbies that worked with grassroots groups and organisations on definite political (read anti-establishment) agendas. In their opinion, human rights organisations must be neutral insofar as political positioning is concerned. That is what gives them the legitimacy to denounce Government for human rights violations without being accused as anti-Government.
3. The most articulate of these leaders was Freud Jean, Executive Secretary of PAJ. The views expressed here are essentially from an interview with him.
4. The slave revolt in the French colony of Haiti in 1804 was inspired by the French Revolution; a movement whose driving forces were the values of *Liberty* and *Equality*. In the same way that movement overthrew the monarchy in France, it did the same in regard to the French colonial rule in Haiti.

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5. The divide following the split is popularly known as "RA" and "RJ" camps. The "RA" is the group that Re-Affirmed the party line and the "RJ" is the group that Re-jected the party line. The title of the official document, which was to be reaffirmed or rejected, was 'Reaffirm Our Basic Principles and Rectify the Errors'. For details on this issue, see Rocamora (1994: 107–38).
6. This is the sense I got after interviewing several members (including the Chair and the Secretary General) of Akbayan, a political party seeking to promote alternative politics.
7. *Bibingka* is a Filipino practice of cooking rice by placing fire both below and above the pot for best results. For further reading on this concept and its implementation in practical advocacy, see Borras (1999).
8. The politics and culture of resistance are kept alive by people's specific struggles for entitlements or in defence of specific interests in their daily life. These daily struggles do not end because in any given society, competition of interests and opposition forces do not stop unless that society is physically annihilated. Therefore, the politics and culture of resistance remain the fertile ground in which the seeds of freedom and continual struggle for social justice are planted ready to sprout and grow into a vibrant people's movement (whenever conditions become favourable) demanding social reforms for a democratic and just social order.
9. A detailed discussion on this topic is contained in an unpublished paper (Mwasaru 2003). On the concept of paradigm, see Guba (1990). In this article, the word "paradigm" is used to mean an operational set of values or worldview with a given position on economic, political and cultural issues that affect the social process involving reforms on the one hand, and maintaining the *status quo* on the other.

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