



Towards the search for a New Economic Dispensation in Uganda: Lessons from COVID-19

When: 12th August 2021; 9:00-12:00PM, East African Time

Where: Kabira Country Hotel; Zoom; Facebook.

Introduction

Over the last 30 years, there have been ideological discretions of the debate on the role of the State in development. This debate has been between the proponents of neoliberalism and its critics. Often discrediting the role of the State, the proponents of neoliberalism have often called for minimal or no State intervention in development since the market is self-regulating and can correct all the market failures. In Africa, this narrative has been embraced by governments through their private-sector led and driven development policies, plans and actions. In most cases, whenever any Government intervention has been made, it has been to protect the rights of the private sector over those of the people and the environment.

For all its promises, the results of this have been neoliberalism reigning supreme over much of the global development policy and practise, producing unparalleled wealth accumulation levels for a handful of individuals and global corporations while the rest of society has been asked to swallow austerity, stagnating incomes and a shrinking welfare state. It can therefore be argued that the rich have been increasingly protected from the market forces, while the poor and vulnerable have been more and more exposed to them. In Africa, provision of essential social services like Education and Health has been put in the market place which has made it expensive for majority of the vulnerable population to access such essential social services. Indeed, under the current pandemic, majority of the citizens are unable to access these essential social services, especially from private owned institutions, given the ever-rising high user fees being charged. In a bid to respond to this, a number of campaigns and debates calling for government regulation of the prices charged by private health, transport and schools' operators. To climax this, the High Court of Uganda has ordered government and professional councils to regulate fees for COVID-19 treatment services so that patients are charged fairly.

It is therefore justified to point out that the COVID-19 pandemic has re-ignited debate on the search and demand for a strengthened central role of the State in development, people centered social and economic policies and the promotion of Economic Social, Cultural and Environmental rights.

However, it is also key to note even amidst the debates for rethinking the role of the State in development, there is still lack of a clear consensus on what the actual role of the state should be. Some proposals are being advance to push for perfect competition between Public and Private institutions, while others are calling for the State to invest in Social Services while regulating the Private Sector. Given this lack of clarity, there is need to re-ignite debate for basic parameters to serve as beginning point in the quest for an alternative paradigm.

It is against this background that SEATINI-Uganda in partnership with Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung-East Africa Office are organising this conference.

Objectives of the meeting:

- To provide a platform for stakeholders to understand and appreciate the link between the current development paradigm and existing development challenges.
- To agree on areas of focus by the school for research and knowledge generation on alternative positions on development policies.

PROGRAM

Moderator: Mr. Charles Mwanguyha Mpagi

Time	Program	Responsible
8:00-8:50am	Arrival and Registration of Participants	SEATINI; CEFROHT; FRA
8:50-9:00am	Welcome Remarks and context setting	Ms. Jane S. Nalunga, Executive Director, SEATINI-Uganda
9:00-09:30am	About the Equator School for Alternative Development Model	Ms. Jane S. Nalunga, Executive Director, SEATINI-Uganda/ Yash Tandon????
09:30-10:00am	Plenary Discussion	Moderator
10:00-10:30am	Keynote speech: Towards a new economic dispensation of Uganda: Learning from past and present experiences	Prof. Samwiri Lwanga Lunyiigo

10:30-12:00pm	Panel of Experts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Yao Graham, Cordinator, Third World Network-Africa • Hon. Ikojo John Bosco – Chairperson, National Economy Committee, Parliament. • Mr. Banjwa Adventino, PhD Student, Makerere University Institute of Social Research (MISR). • Ms. Crystal Simeone, Executive Director, Afrifem Macroeconomics 	
12:00-12:40pm	Plenary Discussion	Moderator
12:40-01:00pm	Official closing remarks	Mr. Brian Kagoro, Programs Director, African Regional Office of the Open Society Foundations.
01:00 pm onwards Lunch & Departure at leisure		