MULTIDISCIPLINARITY,PARADIGMS AND IDEOLOGY IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WORK. *

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*: This paper was inspired by my participation on the workshop on

Hunger and Society held in Soliwayo,Tanzania on December 1983.

Many of the participants to that workshop were invited,because

the convenor thought they had escaped or transcended their narrow,individual

paradigms and could help breaking some new ground in this field.

An attempt was made to crack the ideological barriers among par-

ticipants since many thought they were failing in their efforts

to contribute to solve hunger problems,especially due to these

barriers.

Setting the focus:

        We are all bombarded,on a daily basis,with a lot of talk

about the need for multidisciplinary teams and for sharing our

paradigms with other professionals. Many of us,natural scientists, by training

even feel uncomfortable with or abhor from social sciences' jar-

gon,especially the concept of paradigm. But,what is really be-

hind all this? Let's first look at the terms.

An attempt to define the terms:

PARADIGM:
        Webster's dictionary dfines paradigm as: to show side by side,

example,pattern,(model),outstandingly clear or typical example or

archetype. ( ).

        Thomas Kuhn   speaks of paradigms as schools

of thought in the natural and social sciences,in other words,diffe-

rent ways of looking at the same problem ( ).

        Jevons defines an accepted paradigm as a research tradition,

a line of thought carrying a set of assumptions and guidelines.

**: Note here already the ideological connotation in the notion
    of "accepted".

a way of seeing problems.He thinks paradigms guide the terms of

thought and the type of analysis of a given phenomenon;paradigms

suggest what kind of solutions are acceptable.

A paradigm carries a view of the role of any given science

in society.It implies having a feeling of   responsibility for

the social impact of research and for the interpretation of reality

under the terms of reference of set by the same paradigm.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY:

According to Webster's ( ),a discipline relates to a particular
field of study or subject;it connotes a pattern of behavior and rules
or a system of rules governing conduct. A multidisciplinary approach,
by extension,would bring together individuals with different backgrounds
and from different disciplines.

At the base of multidisciplinarity is the concept that com-

plex problems have many facets that one or two individuals

with conventional training in one field or two cannot handle
           ↑The idea is that the different approaches can be bridged
appropriately. by working on the problems together.

        The problem is that the understanding of what a multi-
              and its potentials and who the members of such a team should be
disciplinary approach,   ,is different for people with different

ideological perspectives.It very much depends on how man has "sliced"
                              ↑Scholars looking at the same pro-
reality into categories and disciplines. blems from different views often
                              even seem to be unable to listen and learn from each
        ⌐For example,for the problem of hunger and malnutrition,the other.
                                                                      ( ).
problem is still basically defined from the disciplinary bias of

the scientists : For the agronomists it's a food supply problem;

for the educator a problem of ignorance;for the demographer a pro-

blem of population pressures;for the planner it's the lack of coor-

dination,and so forth. Most of these approaches are not wrong,but

incomplete.Moreover,multidisciplinary teams,or their members,sel-

dom take the consequences of what they have proposed as solutions.

IDEOLOGY:

Webster's again,defines ideology as: visionary theorizing;manner or content of thinking characteristic of an individual or class;intellectual pattern of any culture or movement;integrated assertions,theories and aims constituing a politico-social program.

Ideological values and duties are imprinted by the family,through education and by the social environment.They are thus not universally shared and are closely bound to our social class extraction.Ideology as a content of thinking and as an intellectual pattern reflects the involuntary elements of ideology which we all carry;it's part of our indeleble (class) heritage.It is ideology that channels our social behavior in predictable directions.On the other hand,ideology as an integrated politico-social program is the result of a voluntary internalization of the values of a given society,be it real or ideal.( ).

Conflicts in the terminology?:

As can be seen,there is some overlapping between the definitions of paradigm and ideology.This lends itself to somewhat of a confusion between what's ideology and what is a paradigm in a specific context,or, where one stops and the other starts (if both are not the extremes of the same cotinuum...). The latter becomes even more difficult to discern when colleagues of ours are calling for integrating and unifying paradigms.

The question is,can an integrated paradigm between the natural and the social sciences be born through multidisciplinary work without bridging the underlying ideological gap between the users of those sciences? It is not enough to arrive at a minimum concensus package;a unified approach requires a common ubderlying ideology. The dilemma,then,is whether a unified paradigm should be a universal goal,as there seems to have been a call for. I contend that if this new unified paradigm becomes a stepping stone to bridge the ideological gap between the practitioners of each individual paradigm this becomes a worthwhile excercise.Now,how this can be achieved is not very clear and certainly not an easy task.Moreover,it will become an almost inevitable source of conflict if the actors are not willing to start sharing a common ideological outlook.

Paradigms have very selective "blindness spots" -often ideological- that explain the so feequently seen discrepancies between ends and means persued by the practitioners of the disciplines related to development work. Paradigms follow that rather rigid slicing or analysis of reality into different disciplines which I mentioned before. Paradigms are thus submanifestations of ideology. As such, they do not clearly replace each other;rather, they continue to coexist and overlap.The evolution from a disciplinary paradigm to an integrated one is seldom smooth;it rather involves a quantum leap. ( ).

The role of conceptual frameworks:

In the effort of coming up with such an integrated paradigm, several colleagues have tried to design conceptual frameworks to help reducing misunderstandings of those who do not share the same paradigm. An example of this is the conceptual framework for the analysis of causes of hunger and malnutrition presented ~~xxxx~~ in Fig.1.(   ). As can be seen,this novel,but not necessarily new approach, introduces three causal levels of hunger and malnutrition, from basic to immediate. ~~The a~~

The acceptance of such a framework presupposes not only the sharing of a new integrated (unified) paradigm,but also some deep-rooted ideological premises. After all,the only thing this (or any) Integrated para- digm is offering is a fresh look at old contradictions in overall de- velopment work.

It seems to me that ~~ix~~ conceptual frameworks like the one here presented may be a intermediate step in the ~~right direction~~ (increasing levels of concientization), especially if they push us to think about the root causes of the problem being presented.The risk,though, is that they may help creating new ca- tegories only, with actions not changing accordingly. Moreover, many traditional scientists and organizations already have problems with the issues raised by such conceptual frameworks (i.e. the UN University's Hunger Program had problems accepting a framework very similar to the one in Fig.I,a fact that makes me wonder what would happen if one added even the ideological parameters in stronger wording into such analyses...).

Cynics would probably raise the question whether such a conceptual framework is not -to begin with- one more example of dressing an ideological (political), often genuinely marxist or pseudo or paramarxist, in sheep's clothes to "sell" as "scientific and a-political" to peers. This, again, highlights the blurred border between paradigm and ideology reinforcing the point I am trying to make.

A missing paradigm in our analysis?:

Many of us already are a mixture of natural and social scientists and, therefore, move inside at least two paradigms. Those of us who are strongly comitted to a community-oriented approach in development work wonder if there is such a thing as a "people's or villagers" paradigm, or a "community to be developed" paradigm. If the answer is yes, would that mean that we, scientists, need to integrate yet another, third paradigm? Would the fact of Not having done so for decades ~~plain why we have so often failed~~ be where we have failed most precipitously, explaining why we have so often failed in the field? Is considering the integration of this third paradigm the basis for a truly democratic approach to development?

I contend that the discrepancy between our level of analysis and our level of concrete actions or propositions for action is part of our ~~mental~~ paradigms, unified or not. We lock ourselves-in consciously or not, most probably due to deep-rooted ideological barriers.

A case in point, again in the area of food and nutrition, was the 1974 World Food Conference in Rome. It did not really politicize the issues. But it unified some paradigms. Now, everybody accepts -at an analytical level- that hunger is a social science concept and of social science's concern, especially its economic and sociopolitical determinants and consequences ( ). But at the level of concrete actions to tackle the causes identified, little can be shown as concrete achievements 10 years after the Conference thus illustrating the discrepancy just mentioned.

In the same above contexts, one wonders, why have development   6

theories only very secondarily touched on hunger and malnutrition

issues? In more recent years, important development documents such as

the Brand Commission Rport, the Scheweningen Report and the Lagos

Plan of Action, hunger and malnutrition, (explicitly mention)

but have not been made into an integral part of the solution by decisively

tackling the basic social injustices at its base. (   ).

Another thing to bare in mind following this idea, is that to begin

with, the modernization paradigm took it for granted that the societies

characterized by industrial capitalism were universally desired. In

fact, no people has ever voted for capital accummulation and indus-

trialization", (   ).

Trascending narrow paradigms:

Do we need to "escape" from our narrow paradigms, the ones we

originally acquired in the bosom of our profession? If yes, the ques-

tion is, naturally, how? By finding a cozy niche in our paradigms we

tend to lose our more adolescent critical approach to the world around us (of which we

certainly should not be ashamed...). Many of us are still unhappy

for not doing what we think needs to be done. Does this mean we have

lost our ideals, surremdering to an outside reality we think we

cannot change? I s this part of accommodation? We often get involved

more in what is (interesting academically) than in what is important,

thus losing articulation with local realities.

Adopting a new unified paradigm may thus be equivalent, for

some, to the civil crisis in a second adolescent crisis in adulthood in which one ques-

tions some very basic values.

To members of any professional guild it is a gigantic task

to show their paradigm to be wrong or only parcially right. It is even

a more gigantic task to show that the paradigm is wrong because the

ideology behimd it is wrong. Herein lies the challenge for us towards

our peers, namely, helping the group making the transition. The risks

are foreseeable: being accused of incompetence when applying new, wi-

der concepts, traditionally outside the accepted paradigm or when of treating

integrating with the paradigm of a different discipline. Under these

circumstances",repressive actions are often taken against these young absconders". ( )

How can we then ventilate our frustrations within our profession? The key question is whether the "dominating"paradigm accepts the idea of dialectic change.This not infrequently being the case,~~but~~ the task ~~wouldxseemxtoxbe~~ of committed scientists would be to increase the contradictions and to push for their resolution through open criticism of field research,its validity and the interpretation of its results,pointing out how out of context with the reality they are.

The defense of a paradigm by guild members usually becomes as important as the defense of their ideology,the former basically being the same ideological defense disguised in professional and scientific justifications.

The role of "thematic discussions",multidisciplinary in nature,has been highlighted by some as a means to break the isolation of individual paradigms in an effort to come up with new,wider,~~more~~ more valid ones.( ). The question remains,though,whether these discussions will be able to bridge ideological gaps and if not, whether a lot of energy should be devoted to this effort. The issue has to be brought up of what the limits are of what can be expected in changing out peers.Is it worth our time trying to change them, or should we devote all our energies to work with the communities to help them bring about real changes? Can we accelerate the pace of history when changing the global,paradigmatic,ideological and political checks and balances.If in taking-on what kind of new responsibilities? There certainly is a role for an avant-garde raising a rallying call to trscend narrow paradigms and helping to create awareness waving an antitechnochratic banner.

We need to move from the normative "should be done" to more effective and pertinent actions actually being taken in which we can make a positive contribution. So far,we have been more successful in ventilating these issues in the literature (like this very article...) rather than affecting real policies that push in the right direction to overcome the major contradictions of underdevelopment.We are coming out of the closet,true.We may even become mainstream,but we run the risk of becoming one more passing fashion if we do not link analysis with action.( ).

Paradigms and the ruling elites:
The trouble with us
is that, While we engage in this bizanthine discussion, paradigmatic
pronouncements and principles, *generated by us* are being taken advantage of, on an
everyday basis, by the pro status-quo ruling elites who have no real
commitments to meaningful changes to improve the quality of life
of the lot; *this* therefore, allocate no or highly insufficient budgets *to development* and
to nobody's big surprise nothing much improves.

In our lobbying with decision makers we often settle
for only a thrshold concensus. But incremental changes
somehow always are taken advantage by of by the elites, most often
the local bourgoisie. Attempts at gradual repairs of the
system are usually normative, often carried out in a token fashion
and sometimes plain naïf. Unfortunately, reality seems to show that
ideas born in diplomacy, stressing harmony rather than conflict are
flawed and end up leaving things as they are. (.)

The ruling class is not ignorant, but rather reactionary; there-
fore, little is accidental about the problems of underdevelopment.
The search for a deeper concensus with decision makers impinges on
what is ideologically licit or illicit. Therefore, improving the
dialogue is not possible ducking on the contradictions of the sys-
tem, when ideological barriers are at stake. This inevitably means
we need to get prepared for some kind of conflict and confrontation.
Solving longstanding contradictions and injustices takes a long and
protracted time and involves an organized struggle. ( ). In last
instance, the biggest agressor and violator of human rights inherently
is the capitalist system and that denunciation alone has no big
publicity interest and only few are willing to listen to it. ( ).

Tackling the basic causes of maldevelopment:

We tend to forget that a scientific approach is not necessarily
a democratic approach.Actually, ~~quite~~ often it~~'~~hides a ~~rather~~ reactio-
nary ~~interior~~ premises.
                                                    in third world countries
    The basic causes of widespread ill-health,for example, ~~acacaden~~ are

seldom addressed in sufficient depth by many of our colleagues thus

distancing their analyses from actual reality. Class issues are tra-

ditionally absent in most sets of analyses as are the overconsumption

habits of the haves causing the imbalances observed in the equation

that leads to unequal access to the benefits of development.

                                              The basic or macro cau-

ses,as depicted in Fig. 1, set the constraints that make more techni-

cal interventions hopeless.Real,longstanding solutions,therefore,de-

pend on the identification and subsequent tackling of these basic

causes. (   )
    What this means is that commitment is sought from us,then,

not only to ends,but to means of achieving real,longlasting develop-

ment. The fact that nothing much is happening or has happened in the
                so many
past in development projects is precisely the problem that should
                                    when finally overcoming the normative,
force us to reconsider our role in them.We always are lured to get

involved in actions with short-lived success and with a grim future.

    "Poverty conditions have to be constantly generated and rege-

nerated for hunger and malnutrition -to go back to our leading exam-

ple- to persist or grow in a society...It is under such circumstan-

ces that the superstrucrture of the society -the laws and the insti-

tutions which implement the laws- ~~seeks~~ acts as a constraint...(   ).
                                        the
Hunger,therefore, may appear to be caused by inadequate food intake

of a number of individuals,but this phenomenon is only the tail end

of a process which has its origins even outside of the country.(   ).

Understanding the basic causes of hunger requires an understanding

of the basic causes of underdevelopment.(   ).

    Many of us have been saying and writing how important the basic

causes are,coming from a very honest bias,but we are not doing too
                                                    many
much to correct them either.We have left unexploited alternative

interventions such as working on peasant unionization schemes in some

ripe contexts,or on minimum wages (i.e. indexing one hour of salaried

work to the cost of 1 kg of staple food or of some mixed consumer food

basket) ,or on employment generating strategies,or on alternatives *directly*

to distorting consumer subsidies,at the expense of food producers *given*

thus transfering wealth from the rural to the urban populations.

The difficulty in identifying basic cause s with a potential

for a corrective action has been argued by some as being the bottle

neck for starting interventions in this domain.This,certainly,

is a poor excuse for inaction.Arriving at options for action

against basic causes may be more difficult at the national level,but

not necessarily at the local level where interventions *usually* remain more

manageable.

The challenging questions that come up at this point are,

can we at all measure and quantify basic causes and if yes,how most

effectively? Is it worth or feasible to conceive a cook-book-type

checklist of data needed at the village and national level to eva-

luate the basic causes *and their impact*? In a previous paper I tried just such an ap-

proach based on my experience in two African countries where I worked

on the subject.(   ).

Once the basic causes are identified and even perhaps ten-

tatively quantified,one has to ask oneself what are objectively the

chances of doing something about them,especially *those* which look more pro-

missing.

I think it is a fallacy to argue that the alternative ~~when~~

~~nothing or very little can be done to tackle the basic~~   is to

do nothing,i.e., *in* health,nutrition or anywhere else until the major

contradictions behind the basic causes are resolved.Rather,we should

get involved in doing things that will ultimately directly affect,

say, health and nutrition ,but that are also primarily related to

some of the basic causes. In other words,the problems we observe

in health and nutrition or any area should all be eye-openers or ~~and~~

points of entry to quickly get to the underlying socioeconomic

determinants of all these problems. We should start making it part

of our concensus that technical interventions that attack only

the immediate and underlying causes are only worthwhile if used

together with actions addressing the basic causes or if used as

vehicles for conscience raising and mobilization. *Such an approach obviously makes the objectives of most development projects obsolete.*

One final intersting observation that has been made in

this context is that catastrophies (either natural or man-made)

have often been quantum leap opportunities to attack basic causes.( ).

The reasons for this are not always very clear,but sometimes catas-

trophies are the last drop in the bucket of the patience of a people

that decides to take a part of their future in their own hands and

thus wipe out some of the longstanding injustices and inequities.

A critical look at what we do:

In our efforts working to bring about development we often

act as if the farmars were the primary obstacle to development.

This,at a time when we are witnessing an externalization of the natio-

nal ecommies of many third world countries which per-se is resulting

in further pauperization with its many associated problems.These

countries are thus,to some extent,importing poverty and hunger.

While we look at these consequences of the process of transnationali-

zation,transnational corporations in alliance and collusion with

the local elites are looking at and studying the transnationalization

behavior of consumer to allow them to increase their sales. We are,

therefore, fighting an uneven battle that we are doomed to lose;

we are looking at solving the consequences while they are busily

increasing the numbers of our future beneficiaries.Under these cir-

cumstances,bringing services to the people is strictly missionary and

paliative.

On the other hand,in our daily work we help generate a lot

of information about the development process;the question is,for

whom does it make a difference to have this new information? To

us academics? to the ruling elites? To the farmers and the urban poor?

Experience shows that it is hardly the latter group that benefits,

despite the fact that most research is launched looking for viable

solutions to their problems.We lose perspective im the process.

Perhaps we should be less interested in collecting hard data of

limited trascendence and should be more interested in keeping track

of the direction of global changes affecting the poor.Only then

would we be prepared to counteract some of the detrimental effects

of these macro changes on the lower income groups.

One wonders,then,if it is an appropriate response to keep calling for more research to understand "the roots of underdevelopment", as it is too often proposed in scholarly discourse.If the researchers miss the forest when they look at the trees because they fail to set aside their perceptions and the preconceptions inherent to their paradigm, funds are never going to be all allocated for tasks directly responding to local needs,less so in light of an objectively worsening global situation for the underdeveloped countries. When looking at the local realities together with the people, a challenge for us should become to help them to make those needs a right and that is a political step in which we have consistently failed. Technical expertise has to be put at the service of social change.

It is difficult to argue that all technical interventions are not good by themselves. A good example is an immunization campaign. What gets often lost in the enthusiasm for the potential benefits of such a campaign is to put its benefits in the proper context of how much it is really contributing to the wellbeing of a population. Are we going to be saving a child from dying from whooping cough or measles just to make him die from a simple diarrhea because of his malnutrition? The immunization campaign has only a limited potential impact on improving the quality of life, of the poor if other interventions directly addressing the problems of poverty are not being implemented simultaneously. This is what we constantly need to be reminded of. Otherwise we are cheating ourselves and,worse, cheating the beneficiaries and the taxpayers (or international organizations)who are footing the bill.

To fight the battle against westernization and modernization as examples of maldevelopment excerting an overall negative impact, we need to determine (and mostly fail to do so) who our enemies are; the ones that put brakes on the most needed changes.This is vital to plan our strategy and our moves to maximize real develoment goals. There are at least three categories of such enemies.One is internal -the local bourgeoisie- and two are external,but exert their influence through the bourgeois governments -transnational corporations (the media lords and advertising agencies included) and, traditional foreign aid.

With foreign aid,be it bilateral or multilateral,we face the

problem that it is an ideological charade to decide which part of it

is good and which is bad.With perhaps counted exceptions,foreign aid

follows western models of development,be it subtly or overtly. It

introduces external resources that either divert existing resour-

ces for new,different purposes or provides services and goods at a le-

vel not possible to maintain with local resources thereafter.(   ).

Does this mean that foreign aid h, as to be rejected in most cases? Is fo-

reign aid patching major contradictions in third world societies?

temporarily Would no aid make internal class contradictions more

acute and thus prompt earlier structural changes in those societies?

I have dealt with these topics elsewhere,but just wanted to highlight

them here again.( ).

Under these circumstances,alternative development strategies

need to be found and followed.In any set of these alternatives,ele-

ments of at least the following principles will have to be considered:

1)We will have to embark in a process of de-westernization incorpo-

rating indigenous and endogenous development,i.e. the incorporation

of traditional medicine or traditional agricultural practices.(   ).
This approach includes an emphasis on adaptation rather than adoption.
Some people have even called for a de-westernization of the west,
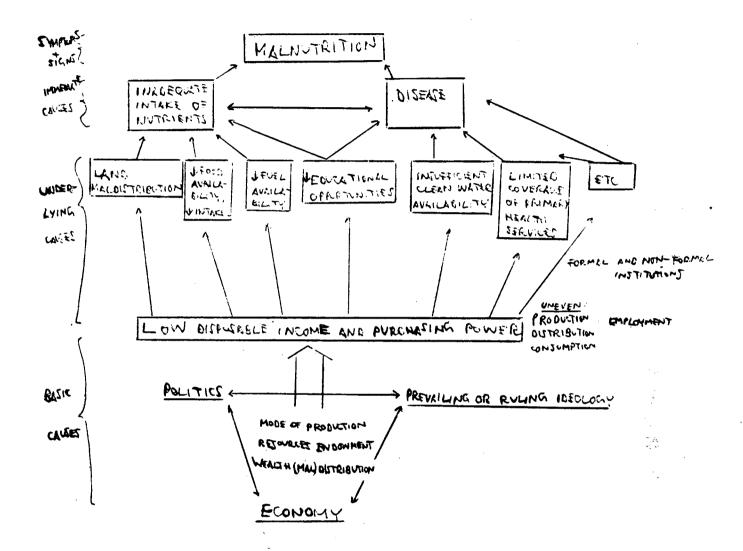concomitant
following this idea even further.

2)Decentralization and democratization of the decision-making process,

the planning and the execution of development plans.(   ).A popular

participatory approach will have to come as a dialectic reaction to

consecutive failures.

3)Our level of involvement in field work will have to change consecu-

tively following three steps.In a first approach,one solicits the

participation of the community in a given project.Participation has

turned out to be harmless for the vested interests and is,therefore,

a regular appendage of every government project.A second level calls

for outright consciousness raising of the population.At the third

level,an effort is made towards the mobilization of the masses,thus

effectively empowering the poor.(   ). What this highlights is that

calls for community participation or for self-reliance will remain

empty deeds without a process of political mobilization in which we

become actors as well.

It is interesting to note that people also find novel adaptive
alternatives to cope with hardship.In each country,poor populations
have developed "survival strategies" to adapt to adverse economic
conditions with shortages of all sorts.These strategies range
from increasing household crowding conditions,to seeking health care
in emergency rooms of hospitals,to increasing percentages of income
spent on food thus cutting on non-food expenditures including on
public transportation,to getting free food from any (or even several)
government and/or private agency food distribution outlets.This be-
haviour wisely maximizes available options, given the
harsh constraints,thus proving the innate popular wisdom which we
so seldom give credit to. These survival strategies become increasingly
keen when the process of socioeconomic and political changes continue
to deteriorate so that there often is a lag time before a deterioration
of health and nutrition indicators in the vulnerable groups begins to
show.Therefore,despite an objective deterioration that make
the basic causes of hunger more dominant, some improvements
in some indicators following past trends (i.e. Chile under
Pinochet). ( ).

The limits of traditional project evaluation:

Under the optic of what this paper presents,the traditional
evaluation process comes under question.This process is designed to
make sure that technical interventions become more effective and
cost-effective.Testing (often faulty) hypothetical premises of pro-
jects or of program components that do not work in the field,heavily
depends on asking the right questions,which most often we are not asking.
These questions are framed by the paradigm and ideology of the ques-
tioner as well.This to a concrete role for us,then a good starting
point;critiquing evaluation for the severe limitations try to
show what is wrong with in each specific context,help developing
perhaps new evaluation protocols that look more at changes
in macro (basic) determinants.

When planners have traditional evaluation in mind,projects tend to
be designed hypertargetting their interventions,i.e.the goal is primarily to
lower the infant mortality rate* what happens after the first year of life
*:is UNICEF's GOBI in such a risk...?

Other indicators of quality of life,that go beyond the first
year of life,obviously need to be monitored as well to pass judge-
ment on project success and thus need to be part of any new ~~exist~~
evaluation protocol. (   ).

In conclusion:

Many questions have been raised in this paper.
I do not have all the answers.   I hope readers are stimulated to contribu-
te to this old discussion that worry so many of us.

SAMPLES
+ SIGNS?

IMMEDIATE
CAUSES }

MALNUTRITION

INADEQUATE
INTAKE OF
NUTRIENTS

DISEASE

UNDER-
LYING
CAUSES }

LAND
MALDISTRIBUTION

↓ FOOD
AVAILA-
BILITY,
↓ INTAKE

↓ FUEL
AVAILA-
BILITY

↓ EDUCATIONAL
OPPORTUNITIES

INSUFFICIENT
CLEAN WATER
AVAILABILITY

LIMITED
COVERAGE
OF PRIMARY
HEALTH
SERVICES

ETC

LOW DISPOSABLE INCOME AND PURCHASING POWER

FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL
INSTITUTIONS

UNEVEN:
PRODUCTION   EMPLOYMENT
DISTRIBUTION
CONSUMPTION

BASIC }

CAUSES }

POLITICS ←———————————→ PREVAILING OR RULING IDEOLOGY

MODE OF PRODUCTION
RESOURCES ENDOWMENT
WEALTH (MAL) DISTRIBUTION

ECONOMY

9... Differs for Urban/rural
(does not apply to subsistence
sector)