

no easy answers. Why is child welfare not such a topical issue in today's world? Politicians, economists and social scientists spend their time discussing nuclear weapons, the Third World debt and AIDS. Granted that these are all important issues in human existence, it is hard to understand why disproportionately little international effort is being directed towards alleviating the living conditions of the majority of children across the globe.

MacPherson's book lays bare some startling facts about child welfare in the Third World. It examines a broad spectrum of the main negative socioeconomic factors which are at play in the life of the average child in the developing world, without pretending that there are easy solutions. The book relies mainly on empirical experiences in developing countries in Asia and Latin America to put forward its case, with minimal reference to the African experience.

Traditional approaches to child welfare are strongly challenged. They are generally seen as alien and western, urban-biased, expensive and therefore unable to provide a realistic answer in the cash-starved societies of the developing world. Strategies which seek to build on what communities already know and have have a greater chance to succeed, he argues.

MacPherson's book, while undoubtedly depressing, shows that it is possible, even in poor countries, to improve the living conditions of the poorest. Tanzania, regarded as one of the world's poorest countries, has been able to achieve what no other African nation has done in terms of bringing social services to its population, thanks to government policy. But Tanzania is now experiencing its worst economic crisis in history, resulting in the loss of some social gains. It is not clear whether there is any relationship between the deteriorating economic conditions and the egalitarian policies of the past.

It is a pity that MacPherson does not attempt to look at the political and military context in which some Third World children live. This is particularly relevant in Southern Africa where apartheid has devastating consequences on the lives of millions of children, especially over the last decade. Coming at a time when common sense seems to be breaking out throughout the world, this book raises issues which deserve to be put in the forefront, on the agenda, of a more peaceful world. MacPherson's book need not be another voice in the wilderness.

Lay people, academics, child welfare activists, and all people interested in advancing one of the most legitimate causes of the twentieth century will find this book both refreshing and stimulating.

Reviewed by Allan Masomere, Harare.

Development Psychiatry: Mental Health and Primary Health Care in Botswana, David Ben-Tovim, Tavistock, London, 1987 (233pp, £12.95 pbk).

This book can be seen as a milestone in the literature of mental health in Africa, describing, with considerable empathy, skill and conciseness, the results of the author's experience in the integration of primary health care and psychiatric services in rural areas, and as a lone psychiatrist with the Botswana Ministry of Health. Until the late 1970s Botswana's only psychiatric facility was an isolated mental hospital, which had become grossly overcrowded. After collaborative work with the WHO and other international agencies, Botswana embarked on a programme of integration of psychiatric care with existing primary health care services. *Development Psychiatry* places this bold experiment in a clear perspective in a national, African and international context.

It should, however, be said at the outset that although the work describes how a psychiatric system can move from a curative and institutional health service to a wider service that incorporates primary health care, it does so from an overt commitment to the physical disease model of mental disorders. "It is my view that none [of the models] have been found to have a wider range of applicability than the [physical] disease model", and, Ben-Tovim goes on to say, that "treating psychiatric disorders as

diseases entities, if not completely secure, is at least a widely recognised working hypothesis, and it is one that will be adopted here" (p9). Unfortunately it becomes clear later in the book that the disease model is not really a working hypothesis to be proved effective or otherwise by the author, but rather the model is assumed effective and this assumption remains unchallenged throughout the book. Not only is the physical disease model the preferred theory, but drug therapy seems the preferred practice: "Once a depressive disorder had been identified by whatever means, our standard treatment was the prescription of the tricyclic anti-depressant Amitriptyline in the dose 125-175 mg daily. Treatment often seemed effective (sic)" (1987:134).

Ben-Tovim offers a taxonomy of psychiatric conditions that are echoed in his chapter titles: emergencies and alcohol; epilepsy, schizophrenia and depression; and what he calls "headaches and heartaches", the symptoms relating to "non-psychotic distress". Although he admits that "non-psychiatric distress" is the one most amenable to non-drug therapy it proved difficult for the author to offer non-medical treatment or help. In fact rarely do interventions described in the book refer to helpers other than nurses or doctors. Social workers are mentioned in passing four times and psychologists twice, and even then without any description of an interventive role.

With the caveat, then, that this book is a fairly explicit description of a purely medical approach to diagnoses and treatments, it is a valuable pioneer work in a field that badly needs indigenous literature.

Reviewed by Joe Hampson SJ, Harare.

Sex Roles, Population and Development in West Africa, Christine Oppong (ed), Heinemann, London 1987 (242pp, £25hbk).

This book is a collection of thirteen diverse and highly informative studies of women in development. The common theme focuses on the crucial roles women play in both the informal and formal sectors, and the contributions emphasise that, for effective development planning in general, women's existing roles, their needs and their potential must be central considerations.

The papers are presented under four headings: Women's Work (two studies, of Muslim women in Nigeria, and women in Bamaka, capital of Mali); Fertility, Parenthood and Development: Yoruba Experiences (five papers on the Yoruba in Nigeria); Population Policies, Family Planning and Family Life Education: Ghanaian Lessons (three studies); and Government Plans and Development Policies (three papers, examining policy in Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Ghana).

It can be seen that although the book purports to cover West Africa, in reality it examines only four of the eighteen countries that might have been included. Of the thirteen papers, seven concern Nigeria, with the major focus on the Yoruba. Thus the book in no way attempts to give a balanced over view of the whole region, but presents selected, detailed studies whose orientation and conclusions have a much wider geographical relevance. Indeed, their relevance is in many senses global, and not restricted to West Africa as a region.

The various papers reflect different academic disciplines and research methodologies. The latter include household surveys, individual and group studies through participant observation and structured interviews, and the use of census data and other official statistics, policy documents, and other existing material. These are presented within the framework of international developments, such as UN, ILO and OAU initiatives, for example the Lagos Plan of Action 1981.

The studies are all of countries with a significant incidence of extreme poverty, and many common problems of development. These include socioeconomic flux as traditional ways and values compete with modernisation; the disruption of the family; illiteracy; and a young population structure and rapid population growth, despite continuing high mortality (at 139, the infant mortality rate of the region is the highest recorded in the world). Fertility is, predictably, extremely high.