

Book Reviews

Social Development in Africa 1950-1985, Arega Yimam, Avebury Gower, London, 1990 (364pp, £35 hbk).

This book, a product of a PhD thesis, provides an historical perspective on the problems of underdevelopment in Africa, and shows how a developmental approach focusing on economic growth has resulted in the marginalisation of the majority of the African population. The author sees social development as an alternative development approach that views people as both the means and end of development. He, therefore, attempts to provide a conceptual framework for social development and discusses its constituent elements.

For the reader who is not familiar with the political and socioeconomic circumstances of Africa, the Introductory Chapter provides very useful background information and a useful analytic framework. Chapter 2 discusses the historical development of social welfare in Africa, and observes that before Independence social welfare services were provided by three systems: the extended family, the church and the colonial administration. Unfortunately this Chapter is not well organised and fails to provide a meaningful link between these three systems of welfare provision.

In Chapter 3 the author draws attention to the lack of progress in the area of social development between 1954 and 1960, but fails to clearly articulate the reasons for this apparent lack of progress. The author does not discuss at length the impact of the development approaches adopted by colonial governments. He does, however, observe that the majority of African people live in poverty, without access to basic life sustaining goods and services. Despite this weakness, the author provides a satisfactory conceptual framework for social development. He sees social development as "a crossbreed between social welfare and community development", and argues that social welfare can only promote social development if it adopts a developmental outlook. Social development is seen as encompassing social service programmes, social welfare programmes, social security, youth programmes, labour relations programmes, population planning, agrarian reform and food security. The distinction the author makes between social welfare and social services is somewhat confusing as it lacks concreteness.

In Chapter 4 the author examines possible alternative approaches to African development. He points out that there are only two choices available to African governments, capitalism and socialism. He is quick to observe, however, that the "political and economic systems currently in operation in many African countries are the result of historical accident or internal pressures rather than properly chosen, properly adapted, and integrated policies". Aid has in many cases influenced the ideological orientation of some governments in Africa. What is important in this connection is adopting strategies that promote self reliance and self sufficiency.

In Part 2 of the book the author analyses selected areas of social development: social welfare, education, health, housing, population planning, social security and social development training. However, the discussion on urbanisation is misplaced and would have been more useful if it had been part of the Introductory Chapter. The author's conclusion is that these areas of social development were moulded on the experiences and value premises of the former colonial powers, hence their inability to respond appropriately to the needs of Africa. The author sums up his discussion by pointing out that development in Africa is unbalanced as it favours the urban elite - whilst the rural people who constitutes 70% of the population remain impoverished and marginalised.

Social development is a topical subject, particularly in developing countries, and this book makes a meaningful contribution towards an understanding of social development. Unfortunately the author spoiled the flow of discussion by dwelling on unnecessary and unfocused details and the issues raised in the discussion do not seem to link. However for the patient reader the book provides an interesting analytic framework for understanding the problem of underdevelopment in Africa.

Reviewed by E Kaseke, Principal, School of Social Work, Harare.

The Role of Community Participation in Development Planning and Project Management, Report of a Workshop in Washington DC Sept 22 - 25 1986, Michael Bamberger, Economic Development Institute/IBRD, Seminar Report No 13, World Bank, Washington DC, 1988 (361 + xpp, US\$5.95).

The concept of community participation has gained enormous popularity in social development circles. It pervades the literature and is a recurring topic for discussion at international gatherings. A large number of reports, studies and journal articles on the subject have been published, and it is an integral element of the philosophies of large development agencies such as UNICEF which has been an avid proponent in recent years. Non Government Organisations (NGOs) have also campaigned for enhanced community participation, particularly at the local level where many of their programmes and services are focused. Community participation has a strong appeal for social workers.

Although community participation is frequently claimed as unique terrain for social development endeavour. It has attracted the attention of economists as well. As this report shows, hard headed economists at the World Bank's Economic Development Institute (EDI) have come to the conclusion that social factors are important in development and that (pvii) "the involvement of intended beneficiaries in the planning and implementation of projects, applications of social analysis in development planning, and gender issues in developing planning and project management" are worthy of careful consideration.

Founded by the World Bank in 1955, to train economists responsible for development planning, investment analysis and project implementation, the EDI has served as an important resource for World Bank personnel and senior civil servants concerned with economic development issues in member countries. Recognising that the social aspects of development have been neglected in its training programmes, EDI organised an international workshop on community participation in Washington in September 1986. Participants