

reflect a functionalist outlook" (p. 186). Thus critical discussion about what are to be considered the main goals for development, argue the authors, is a necessary element of such an evaluation exercise.

The book, while fairly comprehensively compiled, does fall short in certain critical respects. For example the authors' insatiable quest to provide the minutest of details on various topics is questionable. In discussing the study findings, the researchers go into too much theoretical discussion of concepts before presenting the actual study data. In my opinion this is uncalled for and is a weakness evident throughout the book. Another issue on which I take the authors to task is in connection with the question of samples and sampling. The sample of 149 individuals used for the interview section of the study appears to have been too small considering the magnitude of the study. Also, the fact that sampling was not random but haphazard robbed the study of some of its glamour and it follows that the results of the study have to be treated with due caution.

Having said that, I must be quick to add that the greatest attribute of a true academic is having the audacity and presence of mind to acknowledge weaknesses and shortcomings in his or her work and this the authors have unashamedly done. For example, they concede in one part, "We are aware of the risk that we have misinterpreted our interview data since, as foreigners, we are influenced by a Western culture and Western notions" (p. 158). All the same, one important attribute of this book is that it does utilise diagrams, sketches and makes extensive use of tables and other illustrations. While I have some misgivings concerning some aspects of the detail to do with methodology (e.g. lack of scientific sampling), I still feel this book is valuable not only to those engaged in research work at home or in foreign countries but also to those engaged in literacy work in particular and in development work in general, particularly in the developing world.

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**The Field Directors' Handbook: an Oxfam Manual for Development Workers**, edited by Brian Pratt and Jo Boyden, Oxford University Press, 1985.

The title of this book may deter ordinary development workers from reading it because it may be thought that it pertains only to Oxfam workers. On the

contrary, the **Field Directors Handbook** has been carefully compiled using experience gained in development work worldwide.

The handbook contains a variety of topics covering major development issues. For easy reading the book is set out in eight parts, each one dealing with specific issues. The introductory Part I deals with issues relevant to all development programmes. It is explicit about what the role of non-governmental organisations in field operations should be. An NGO is not expected "to create structures parallel to those of the state, nor to act as a substitute in the provision of services which are recognised as a state responsibility". Instead NGOs should concentrate on working with groups that are ignored or by-passed by the State, both in the urban and rural areas. This would be an important lesson for development workers in Zimbabwe where NGOs have mushroomed and are all vying to be the ones giving support to the various communities.

Parts 2 and 3 are a must for all development workers. These two parts cover an area that is often totally ignored by people operating in the field – the historical and socio-economic circumstances in which the development programme is located. The Handbook emphasises the importance of local community participation, both in the planning and implementation of the development programmes. The present emphasis is on choosing *small scale*, less expensive options implemented by the communities themselves. It is at this level that NGOs can intervene without necessarily getting involved in global politics. Development plans should no longer be designed by armchair directors in foreign capitals where the organisations originate.

Part 4 deals with issues relating to social development programmes which aim at increasing participation, strengthening community organisation, reducing dependence, and heightening critical awareness. NGOs here should be involved in the social education of the groups they are assisting. Training programmes should include imparting vocational skills, life skills, literacy skills and communication skills. The section on agriculture offers very interesting reading as it deals with the aims of agricultural projects which are to help people become self-sufficient in food production. It also deals with topics related to conservation, forestry and extension. All these are issues affecting food production in the Third World.

The section on health deals with health intervention which, the handbook says, must be flexible and adaptable to the local socio-economic and geographical circumstances. Health must be seen to be an integral part of the overall development process and therefore emphasis should be preventive

rather than curative. Oxfam, like other NGOs, sees its role as being the delivery of primary health care to the whole community and this includes programmes in nutrition, immunisation, sanitation and water, mother and child health, training and simple curative services and first aid. The section deals further with specific common diseases and I find this very useful basic information for fieldworkers who are without medical training.

The Third World, particularly Africa and Asia, is prone to both natural and unnatural disasters for a number of reasons. However, in most cases it is the poorest members of the community who suffer most from this disruption of peoples' lives. Part 8 provides quite interesting guidelines for disaster assistance and indicates the various Oxfam procedures. It also gives a list of agencies involved in disaster relief and briefly states how each operates. Further on the section deals with various disaster responses which include all aspects dealt with in the book. These responses include the making of assessments by the field staff of needs related to health and nutrition, physical infrastructure and administration.

It must be noted that Oxfam is doing good work throughout the world and the compilation of this handbook is a masterpiece. It should not go unnoticed, however, that Oxfam has not discovered a magical formula, other NGOs are using the same methodology. However, I find it useful to combine Oxfam's experiences with those of other NGOs as the handbook has provided flexible and indeed broad guidelines to practical development issues.

The book avoids, while not denying the importance of theoretical studies, jargon and complex theoretical concepts. This is due to the diversity and the number of countries in which Oxfam operates. This is also a blessing in disguise for other development workers not necessarily working for Oxfam and this is where the handbook is particularly useful. Also for further reading, the book offers a resources section which indicates books, journals and institutions where information can be obtained.

The address list in the last section is very practical indeed. It gives Oxfam Field officers addresses by continent together with their telephone numbers. Also a list of international Development Agencies is given together with their addresses. This book is a must for both development agencies and development workers.

The only criticism one may point out is that the issues raised are rather arbitrary. Again the same points are repeated over and over throughout the

eight sections of the book. One finds solace in that the editors were aware of this and have tried to overcome it, in some sections, by cross referencing topics covering the same points.

In summary therefore Parts I, II and III should be consulted by all concerned with development work. For practitioners involved in specific issues consultation should be made of the other parts dealing with their area of concern. These parts are concerned with social and economic development, health, agriculture and disasters. Here one finds very interesting detailed treatment of specific programmes with examples experienced in the field. For example, on energy sources and use mention is made of strides made in India and China in biomass production, etc.

I recommend this book as a must for all development workers in the Third World: for Zimbabwean workers Oxfam's experience in the handbook will be invaluable given the developmental problems the country is currently facing. I see this book going a long way in assisting development workers in the Third World. It could also be used in schools that are teaching development as a subject.

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**About Understanding – ideas and observations on cross-cultural communication**, Andreas Fugelsang, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala, Sweden, 1982, 231 pgs, US\$12,00.

A major aim of this interesting book is to increase our understanding of cross-cultural communication, and especially its relations to language and media technology. Fugelsang introduces the task by contrasting modern western logical thought with third world thinking patterns. He abhors the notion that those who use traditional modes of thought are "illiterate, irrational and prelogical", proposing that such misconceptions are due to an ethnocentric language trap. In other words, when western scientists analyse the so-called 'tribal cultures', they do so through culturally biased eyes, obviating perception of wholeness, unity and order. Fugelsang's main argument here is a restatement of the Whorf-Sapir principle of linguistic relativity that perception of reality is a function of the language used, which differs from culture to culture. If cross-cultural communication is to occur, mutual understanding is necessary. Unless observers have a similar linguistic background, perceptions of reality will differ.