

Following this valuable overview of the environment in Southern Africa, we look forward to other products from SARDC's resource centre and congratulate them on this one.

Reviewed by Anne Derges, Librarian, School of Social Work.

Social Policy and Administration in Zimbabwe, School of Social Work, Harare, Zimbabwe, Journal of Social Development in Africa, ISBN: 0-7974-1468-1 (1995), 212pp, Price: Z\$60, US\$25 (p/b).

The book discusses the history of social policy in Zimbabwe from the pre-Independence period up to the present time. The book looks at major factors – ideological, cultural, political, availability of resources and regional and international organisations which determine the direction of social policy. The book also considers poverty and inequality in developing countries with particular emphasis on Zimbabwe. One result of poverty has been that “...increasingly great numbers of peasants annually drift into urban squatter compounds and swelling the ranks of the unemployed” (p 40). This trend does not apply to Zimbabwe alone, but other African countries are also going through. Different aspects of social policy and administration in Zimbabwe are also discussed. These are rural development, social welfare, social security, health, housing and education. The last chapter is an overview of the above topics.

During the pre-Independence period, social policies regarding the above aspects were discriminatory to blacks. Not only were the social policies discriminatory, they also forced blacks to lose some of their traditional practices. For example, health policies discouraged the indigenous people from using traditional healers. The policies transformed formerly self-sufficient medical practices and made them dependent on foreign medical practices which the people scarcely understood and which were, in any case, largely inaccessible (especially to those who lived in rural areas). All other aspects of life were similarly affected. It was sadly noted that during the pre-Independence period, when the country had more resources, the quality of life for whites was much better than that for blacks, and it was only after Independence that the quality of life for blacks began to improve. Unfortunately the economy then started to go down, hence the introduction of the structural adjustment programme. The programme has resulted in a low quality of life again for black people, and up to now, Zimbabwe is still going through this, with its negative consequences for the majority.

The authors did well by starting with the definition and analysis of social policy. This is vital because definitions of concepts vary from one scholar to another. It discusses factors which shaped the development of social policy in Zimbabwe

(both internal and external). These include: ideology, availability of resources, politics, culture and international and regional organisations. The book mentioned that lack of resources undermines the importance of ideology as a determinant of social policy. While lack of resources undermines the importance of ideology, it creates a danger in the sense that it encourages dependency – for example, the structural adjustment programme, which does not only affect Zimbabwe but other African countries too. As an alternative to structural adjustment, the authors suggest an African approach, but leave us in the dark as to what that African approach entails.

The book did a good job by concluding each chapter with recommendations. To effectively implement the authors' recommendations, not only in Zimbabwe, but in other African countries, the right technology and manpower are needed. I am aware that lack of resources is another problem facing developing countries, but I feel that lack of technology and manpower are the major problems. Lack of manpower in developing countries is exacerbated by the fact that when the economy of a country goes down, intellectuals migrate to countries where the economy is still better.

Overall the book is quite enlightening on social policy and administration in Zimbabwe. It clearly outlines a wide range of social policies which affect the quality of life for the majority in Zimbabwe.

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Alleviating Hunger in Zimbabwe: Towards a National Food Security Strategy, M Rukuni & T S Jayne, University of Zimbabwe Publications, Harare, Zimbabwe, ISBN:0-908307-18-7, 1995, 62pp.

Just a few years ago, Zimbabwe could feed her population and export grain to neighbouring countries. Thus she was dubbed the "*breadbasket of Southern Africa*". Zimbabwe was charged with the responsibility of coordinating the food security programme in the region. Objectives of the programme were to satisfy the basic food requirements for all people who need it and to eliminate periodic food crises. This meant the need to maintain adequate foodstocks at all times and ensuring accessibility of the food to all.

While the grain silos were full and overflowing with food, there were cases of suffering from what one may call artificial famine. Some people did not have enough food to eat. It is against this background that *Alleviating Hunger in Zimbabwe: Towards a National Food Security Strategy* is written. The book looks at "*a food security paradox*" in Zimbabwe where "*at national level, the country is food secure, but at household level, there are several cases of food insecurity and malnutrition*".