

The Design and Management of Poverty Reduction Programmes and Projects in Anglophone Africa, Michael Bamberger, Abdullahi M. Yahie, George Matovu (eds), 1996, Economic Development Institute of The World Bank, EDI Learning Resources Series, World Bank, Washington D C, ISBN:0-8213-2767-4, (p/b), Price: N/K.

Poverty alleviation has become a timely topic in the developing countries in recent years, particularly in the context of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). The volume edited by Bamberger, Yahie and Matovu was published at a time when several African countries were implementing poverty alleviation programmes. It addresses important issues such as the development of guidelines for improving the identification, design, implementation, and sustainability of poverty reduction programmes and projects.

The volume under review is based on papers presented at a seminar in Kampala, in 1991 on *"the Design and Management of Targeted Poverty Alleviation Projects in Anglophone Africa."* The seminar was jointly organised by the Economic Development Institute, the Poverty and Social Policy Division of the Africa Technical Department of the World Bank and the Uganda Management Institute. The main objectives of the planners, poverty programme managers and researchers from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia who attended were to review the participating countries' experiences with poverty reduction programmes and to develop guidelines for improving the *"identification, design, implementation, and sustainability"* of national programmes and projects.

The volume, which is a compendium of 13 essays, begins with a lucid 8-page overview which provides an excellent summary of poverty alleviation strategies in Africa and guidelines for the design and management of poverty programmes and projects. The essays are grouped into five broad parts that address: (a) approaches to poverty alleviation in Sub-Saharan Africa; (b) key issues in poverty alleviation; (c) lessons from project visits; (d) guidelines for the design and management of targeted poverty alleviation projects; and (e) recommendations and conclusions.

Chukwuma Obidegwu provides a comprehensive and well-written discussion of economic trends, adjustment and poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. He argues that the macro-economic reforms have generated extensive transitional problems (eg, poverty) and marked socio-spatial inequalities. Abdullahi Yahie's essay on poverty and approaches to poverty alleviation in Ghana, Uganda, Zambia and Malawi evaluates the effectiveness of the economic development policies and poverty programmes in the four countries.

Michael Bamberger offers a penetrating analysis of the crucial role of strategic, conceptual, institutional and operational issues, in the design and management of targeted poverty alleviation programmes. In the next chapter, which I found very

instructive, Bamberger draws on extensive first-hand experience to examine poverty alleviation approaches in Latin America and Asia (eg, social funds, targeting, credit, etc) and their potential applicability in Africa.

George Matovu, David Kithakey and Abdullahi Yahie discuss decentralisation and its effects on poverty alleviation efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa. Michael Bamberger and Apollonia Kerenge examine gender issues in poverty alleviation and highlight several "*gender-based forms of exclusion*" such as women's limited access to shelter, fuel and health services, plus increased exposure to environmental problems. After examining the factors that hinder women's participation in anti-poverty programmes the authors suggest practical ways of making the programmes more gender-sensitive. The two authors provide a rich overview of the issues that adversely affect African women.

The role of NGOs in poverty alleviation programmes is examined by Abdou Drabo and Abdullahi Yahie. The authors are, however, silent about the existing power relations between NGOs that are often resource-rich and the shaky structurally-adjusting governments in the South. Joseph Okune examines the Programme to Alleviate Poverty and Social Costs of Adjustment (PAPSCA) which was introduced by the Government of Uganda to alleviate poverty and the social costs of adjustment after the adoption of the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) in 1987. George Matovu and Abdullahi Yahie highlight the lessons learned from three project visits undertaken during the seminar to an urban renewal project in Kampala; the Rakai AIDS orphans project; and the Luwero war widows project. Though interesting, the essay however seems out of place in the volume and should not have been included. Abdullahi Yahie focuses on adapting the project cycle to the special characteristics of poverty alleviation projects.

The essay by Abdullahi Yahie on "*Improving the Selection and Design of Poverty Alleviation Projects*" takes the reader through practical ways of improving anti-poverty projects. The penultimate chapter by Abdullahi Yahie provides useful guidelines on how to improve the implementation and sustainability of poverty alleviation projects. In the final chapter Michael Bamberger and Abdullahi Yahie provide several practical recommendations and conclusions. A few of the more interesting include recommendations on improving the identification, selection, design, implementation and sustainability of poverty alleviation projects.

Although the editors have produced a readable volume, some of the common problems of an edited volume are evident. For example, the essays vary considerably in their thoroughness, analytic depth and linguistic style. Nevertheless, this volume is an important addition to the burgeoning literature on poverty and is a valuable reference source for practitioners, policy-makers, development agencies, and researchers.

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