

BOOK REVIEWS

Health and Health Services for Planning Workers: Four Case Studies, Richard Laing, Evaluation and Planning Centre for Health Care (EPC) Publication No 10, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, Summer, 1986 (82pp, no price given).

This publication is based on four case studies on plantation workers' health and services in Malaysia, South India, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. Its main assumption, that all plantations are essentially similar regardless of the political system of the country, leads to a conclusion that the improvement of the lives of plantation workers in all countries can be based on a few comparative studies.

An attempt is made to compare in general the population and development indicators as well as health indicators in the four countries. In the introduction the author admits that the methods of study applied in each case have their own weaknesses and strengths, from a participatory approach in Zimbabwe to focus groups in Asia.

Agriculture is divided between smallholders, plantations, and government and state land development schemes in Malaysia, and in this sector economic growth rate is lower with a high incidence of poverty. A similar situation is observed in South India where large company-managed estates of coffee, tea and rubber mostly employ the deprived social groups. Comparisons are made between the cases of Sri Lanka and of Zimbabwe where most workers are descendants of migrant labourers from Mozambique and Malawi. An historical perspective attempts to link the development of plantations with migrant labour, which has no role in defining its own health care due to poverty.

The author goes on to compare findings from a number of surveys with his own observations on household income and expenditure, nutritional status and food intake, housing, water and sanitation, child care facilities, and health and health services on estates. It should be noted that, in India; the Plantation Labour Act 1951, serves to protect the interests of the workers in a number of these areas, although it is not fully implemented.

Although the author's conclusion from the analysis of various surveys is very clear on the possible outcome of the health indicators in plantation workers, one feels that there may be many intervening factors which tend to make it difficult to make a statistical comparison which will justify the author's

clarity. Nevertheless, the author has gone to great length to look at the situation personally, and involved himself in focus groups, attempting to find out what the impact of labour union acts is on plantation workers. At the same time, the author has reviewed the outcome of several surveys undertaken in the four countries which all come to the same conclusion.

This publication will be very useful for all those who are conscious of the plight of plantation workers. It can be used as a document for formulating future strategies in many countries as the outcomes of programmes seem to be the same in each case.

The author has attempted to analyse the situation in an objective manner, devoid of emotionalism. The author's recommendations are well worth taking note of as they try to lay down possible ways of remedying the situation.

This publication is well worth reading and I recommend it highly despite some of the weaknesses that have been alluded to.

Reviewed by Peter Kanganiso Runyowa, University of Zimbabwe, Godfrey Huggins School of Medicine, Harare.

Africa's Refugee Crisis: What's To Be Done?: CIMADE, INODEP, MINK, Translated by Michael John, Zed Books, London, 1986 (158 pp, \$6.95 pbk).

'Talk about our country. Don't let people forget us'. As Daniel Mayer, former President of the International Federation of Human Rights, notes in the preface, this book is an attempt to do precisely that. Initially published in French in 1984, this book (hereafter, ARC) is the result of two seminars which CIMADE, INODEP and MINK (the International N'kruma Movement) organised in the winter months of 1981-82, with the assistance of a number of Africans living in France, many of whom had the legal status of refugees.

In some respects ARC is out of date. Since 1982 the number of refugees has increased and generally the situation across Africa has worsened. Partly as a result of the global economic crisis, economies are stagnating and standards of living have fallen. Debt problems constrain most development plans. Many African countries require external assistance for essential imports, including food for their urban populations. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are promoting economic adjustment measures, often draconian in nature, as a prerequisite for additional assistance.

The UN Special Session on Africa, called in June 1986 to address some of these issues, has come and gone. In spite of the rhetoric the international community has shown little commitment to Africa in its efforts to address the underlying problems, which are reflected especially in the widespread famine and growing numbers of refugees and other displaced people in southern Africa.

Yet ARC is both timely and useful. It is timely because refugee flows in Africa show no signs of abating. They embody personal and community