

***From Early Child Development To Human Development***

by Mary Eming Young (Editor), 2002, Washington:  
The World Bank, pp. 406.

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In this book, the author discusses that children are our future. Thus investing in effective childcare and education is, accordingly an investment in human development, observes the author. Mainly four critical "path ways" that link early childhood to human development are discussed in detail: Education, Health, Social Capital and Equality. It is argued that these four path ways are all important contributors to economic growth, and that early childhood interventions help ensure children's progress in primary school, continuation through secondary school, and successful entry into the work force. Here the contributory views of Nobel laureates in economics such as Tinbergen, T.W. Schultz, R. W. Fogel and A. Sen are presented.

This volume contains the overview of the proceedings of the conferences held before and after April 2000. To stimulate the discussion about investments in early childhood development the World Bank hosted an international conference, entitled "Investing in our children's future", in Washington, D.C., on April 10-11, 2000. It was an extension of previous conference hosted by the World Bank, entitled "Early Child Development: Investing in future" that had been held at the Carter Presidential Centre, Atlanta, Georgia in April 1996. The conference featured the benefits of investing in young children, and measuring ECD standards of care, to ensure a fair start for all, based on case studies. It further evaluated the effectiveness of ECD programs, with presentations focused on the role of private initiatives in influencing public policy. Conclusions include the pursuit of a continued evaluation on the effectiveness of ECD programs, and, a deliberately planned global coalition to fund ECD initiatives.

The present volume is organized into five parts dealing with twelve sub themes. The major sections are: The Benefits Of Investing In Young Children; Measuring

The Early Opportunity Gap; Evaluating The Effectiveness Of Early Childhood Programs; The Private Sector's Influence On The Public Sector; and, Investing in the Future Action and Policy.

This is a compendium of all relevant information required to under take the ECD projects. A key social consideration is that children who have a poor start are at increased risk for antisocial behaviour, potentially resulting in increased crime and violence in society. For the world regions to cope with the profound socio-economic changes occurring, attention must be given to the competence and coping skills of all populations. Ontario has taken a major step in this direction with the establishment of early child development and parenting centres.

Most of the research reviewed suggest that investment in five areas may have the greatest benefit: (1) well-trained staff who are motivated and committed to their work with children, (2) facilities that are safe and sanitary and accessible to parents, (3) ratios and group sizes that allow staff to interact appropriately with children, (4) supervision that maintains consistency, and (5) staff development that ensures continuing and improving quality.

To examine in greater depth the effectiveness of early childhood programs, the Bernard van Leer Foundation launched the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) in January 1999 in partnership with the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development. The question being explored in this initiative is, "What makes early childhood programs effective, in a variety of contexts, for diverse participants and stakeholders-from children, to parents, to community members and policymakers?" The emphasis in this initiative is on the effectiveness of the process of early child development (ECD) programming, rather than specific outcomes of ECD programs. This describes the key features of the initiative, including the participating programs, the organization and underlying assumptions, and the qualitative research tools and strategies used to collect and analyse program data.

In Jamaica, approximately one in every three children under the age of 4 (i.e., approximately 70,000 children) lives in poverty. Home-based early childhood programs represent perhaps the greatest hope for breaking the cycle of poverty in this country. How communities can make a difference: Five Case Studies highlight ways the private sector can influence public and provide insight on two issues: How do effective ECD programs involve local communities to become culturally and financially sustainable? Can private-public partnerships enhance the potential for taking ECD programs to scale?

In the chapter on "Narrowing the Gap for Poor Children", the discussion is on

how to help very young children grow to be smart and healthy. The important step is to engage families, communities, universities, religious and other organizations, as well as government, to invest in the first and most lasting hope of the new century, the world's children.

The last chapter "The Political Challenge: Commitment and Cooperation" considers the societal benefits and constraints in investing in early child development and the political challenge for doing so. Some factors, steps, and "rules" are suggested for investing in policies of action that would help bring ECD programs to scale.

In this book each essay has its own contribution that is unique, but if read together they present a mosaic, which characterizes the features of relationship between early child development to human development. This is a compilation of a systematic work by well-known authors. Undoubtedly, the book is a good academic work that would offer foundation for future research work. At the same time it would help the policy makers and planners in arriving at solutions to the growing needs of children across the globe.

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***Rural Development System*** by D. N. Gupta, 2001, New Delhi: Books

India International, pp. 444, Price: Rs. 550.00

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D.N. Gupta is a mechanical engineer who joined the IAS [Indian Administrative Service] in 1989 from Orissa. His specialization is micro planning, project design and management of programs. His book stands apart from several other books on planning that give usual dose of statistics on five-year plans, and concentrate on an abridged presentation of merits and demerits of planning in India.

The book runs very useful and meticulously presented 444 pages. It is a neatly printed book but for some misplaced punctuation marks. First of all, expert foreword by Prof. S.R. Hashim, a planning commission member, invokes interest in the book. The book betrays being written by an engineer-turned administrator who has more than a decade of association with planning and management of rural development programs. At present he is at the helm of affairs, as the Deputy Secretary of rural development; Government of India. These two facts attract readers from among both policy-making circles and researchers.

A cursory glance at the pages of the book shows that a reader is well supported by a list of abbreviations, a list of tables and figures alphabetically arranged and an index. These aspects have an all-pervasive coverage. Patient, dexterous and systematic efforts have gone into printing, expansion of abbreviations and index formation which are normally neglected by authors.

The book is classified into three parts with the First Part giving an 'executive summary'. This part consists of seven chapters. It gives definitions of concepts connected to India's rural development. He has also highlighted most significant and practical problems of rural development and finally given a clear and cryptic explanation of solutions for the policies that are not well-implemented so far in the country.

Part Two of the book dissects the entire system of rural development programs. In other words, the author gives a critical and evaluative look at the policies of rural development, the strategies adopted to implement these policies, program designs as well as management and implementation of programs. Such an attempt is made for rural development program at all levels of federal governance, namely Central Planning commission, State Planning Board and *Grama Panchayats* (GPs). Any reader with academic, policy-making or research bend will be glued to the book and will not feel like skipping a line of this part of the book.

There are five chapters in this part of the book. Chapter one delves into the methodology of research of various rural development policies. Chapter two elaborates the details of current macro economic problems of India, like population, unemployment and poverty. Out of these, D.N. Gupta rightly concentrates on the meaning, causes and programs that ameliorate people from the jaws of poverty. Third chapter is directed to analysing the wage employment, self-employment, asset building and consumption-improving anti-poverty programs carried out throughout the post independent era. In this direction, salient features, analysis of data, scheme design and delivery system and implementation of JRY, EAS, MWS, IAY, IRDP and TRYSEM are meticulously

given. Here, a special case study of the state of Kerala, considered a Model State in terms of human development and demography, is cautiously presented. Among other factors, behavioural issues and local institutions are correctly emphasized as significant challenges against the implementation of rural development programs. Fourth and fifth chapters are very precious outcome of the author's rich practical experience with sound intellectual background, and therefore, his recommendations hold water. He prescribes changes that have to be brought about in the formulation of policies, in strategies, in institution building and in the delivery system. His emphasis is understandably in the form of structural changes and behavioural changes titled 'hardware' and 'software', respectively. In these suggestions, he resounds the need for restructuring anti-poverty programs at macro level and the need for strengthening and re-engineering *panchayath raj* system at the local levels. At both the above levels he correctly stresses on building and nurturing conducive institutions. He also gives the direction in which the policy makers should proceed on the path of rural development by choosing the right policy, sound strategy, proactive institutions and effective management of rural development programs.

Some important suggestions that demand further penetration into the book are as follows:

1. Need to reshape wage employment programs into infrastructure development programs.
2. Need to take up only works under 'pucca' category, 'kachcha' works should be undertaken with community contribution.
3. Regrouping of IRDP, TRYSEM, SITRA and DWCRA into one income generation program with 10% of the amount being allotted to capacity building among widows, the handicapped and orphans under social security programs..
4. Need to connect rural youth with rural industries or prospective industries.
5. Need for agricultural extension workers.
6. Technology in the field of agriculture, non-conventional sources of energy, education and health should be as per local needs.

The above suggestions carry weightage because they are the results of commendable primary data analyses and evaluation of the same in six states. The measures suggested are of worth consideration for optimising Government fund utilisation and improving productivity. They also address the problem of wastage of funds, at various levels of implementation of rural development programs. There are suggestions to reduce cluttering number of programs and streamline them into practically viable classifications.

A hurried reader feels that the same problems and policies. But patient reading makes one realize that there has been need to do so to arrive at conclusion regarding these problems at different levels of implementations.

Even a glance at the vision and wisdom-packed conclusion pulls a reader to further delve into the details of the book. In his conclusion, he states that rural development should assume systems approach in which the issues related to policy making, strategy formulation, program design, delivery system and implementation should be addressed in total perspective. In order to redeem people from poverty, we have to focus our attention on the factors which are leading to increase in poverty and should choose successful policy options which will facilitate improving human capacities and creating economic opportunities; the need to take measures for building institutions at all the required levels in order to allow the implementation of policies and the need to take management initiatives to improve the capacity of delivery system (institutions) and enhance the efficiency of implementation, should also be addressed.

In terms of the volume of material collected for study, strategy building and management of rural development, the book deserves to be called a *mini encyclopaedia* of Indian rural development. This is also true, as executive of six states have spent their value-imbibing man-hours.

On the whole, the book is not only worth reading by the students and faculty of rural development, researchers and policy makers; but it is worth several look backs into the book as they proceed with the aim of rural development. This is because Gupta's book is a comprehensive reading material that needs to be read stage by stage and implemented there on. The book is a treasure carrying depth in terms of analyses of objectives, analyses of *modus operandi* and evaluation of rural development programs, which should rightly be the end of all planning process in India.

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***Thinking Social Science in India: Essays in Honour of Alice Thorner***, Edited by Sujata Patel, Jasodhara Bagchi and Krishna Raj, 2002, New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd, pp.468, Price: Rs. 795.00

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This remarkable collection of essays is edited by three distinguished scholars, Sujata Patel, Jasodhara Bagchi and Krishna Raj who have in-depth understanding of Indian society and culture. The editors must be commended for the excellent job they have done in putting together a very good collection of papers using a very appropriate sequencing of the chapters. Given the excellent academic credentials of most of its contributors, the papers are of generally high quality and every paper has something to offer by way of analytical incisiveness. They are so thought-provoking that they offer fresh insights and motivate the readers to think and reconsider many of their perspectives on Indian society.

This volume is in honour of Alice Thorner, the silent institution-builder in the social sciences in India. For more than five decades, she has walked hand in hand with social scientists, contemplating the changing Indian economy, society and polity. This collection of essays dealing with diverse issues, is a tribute to her. Written by eminent scholars from different parts of the world, such issues are seminal to the thinking of social sciences. The articles have raised and discussed issues relating to ideology and theory in Indian society with varying perspectives and differentiated foci.

The unique feature of this volume is that it brings together economists, historians, political scientists, anthropologists and sociologists. The thirty-one essays are grouped in four parts. The first part entitled 'Contemporary perspectives' explores themes and methodologies used by Alice and Daniel Thorner in analysing agrarian change, capitalism and gender issues. Despite a strong methodological leaning towards analysis of data, Alice saw the merits of case-level information and its interpretation to assess the complex processes of change taking place in a hierarchical pluralistic society such as India. The second part, 'Journey of the Economy' focuses on many aspects of economic changes that have occurred in India in the post-independence period while also analysing India's unfinished agenda. The third part examines fresh ways to assess the world that constitutes India today. The last part 'Politics in History and History in Politics' contains essays, which interpret both the colonial legacy and present day political processes in India.

A major policy shift in Indian economy with profound long-term consequences is the new direction set after 1991 - adoption of the policy of liberalisation and globalisation. India's transition in 1991 to a regime of 'Structural adjustment' is an event of great historical significance which merits serious study but which is shrouded in a great deal of misconception, some of it is nurtured for ideological reasons precisely because of the significance of the event itself. Not only has a rich literature on development planning taken shape within India, but also the class nature of the Indian state and the class character of Indian planning have become matters of intense debate and discussion. In this context, Achin Vachnaik's article assumes significance. It provides a powerful critique of current trends and stresses the fact that many of the actual policies in India are shaped by the urban elites in India. We are today witnessing the pressure for evolution of a consumerist culture. Beauty contests do not enjoy much respect in the West. The growth area for further development of the glamour business is in the developing world. A revealing obsession is the way in which India has been repeatedly touted as 'beauty superpower'. Manoranjan Mohanty in his incisive article establishes several important conclusions. In her view, there is enough evidence to show that globalisation and liberalisation operate to capture the large middle class market in the third world.

Arguing that the IMF-World Bank stabilisation programme ensures neither adjustment nor growth in the debtor countries who are compelled to abide by these programmes in the face of their payment crises and loss of international credit worthiness, S.P. Krishnaswamy calls for a fundamental rethinking in the approach of IMF or World Bank in their dealing with debtor countries. One is concerned with the almost complete absence of measures to protect the poor against the consequences of the IMF-World Bank stabilisation policies. Cuts in expenditures of social welfare schemes and withdrawals of food subsidies push the standard of living of the poor below the subsistence level. According to Krishnaswamy, globalisation and structural adjustment programme have focused principally on organised industry, trade and finance sector to the virtual neglect of agriculture and allied industries as well as relatively unorganised sector.

K. Saradamoni in her chapter focuses on the failure of early development plans. The state has also failed to act as an agency of social justice and development. The benefits of development have not percolated to the vulnerable, marginalized section of society and access to such basic goods



and services is very unequally distributed. We have entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the world's largest democracy with the largest number of illiterates and poor people.

Till very recently Indian women were treated as a silent lot in Indian history. No one had expected them to possess a voice of their own. Many of women's writings have been marginalized and the notion of recording their alternative conception of culture and power simply did not exist. Almost overnight we are experiencing a change. In Uma Chakravorthy's view, it is the women's movement of the 1970s and 80s, which had an explicitly political agenda of retrieving women's voice.

Nabaneeta Deb Sen, in her article describes the epic world as a male world. Women hardly play anything but a negative role. In general, the epic woman is not allowed to have a life of her own or mind of her own. Gita Sen emphasises the fact that a central feature of transformation of labour is the growing importance of women labour as the core of economic process.

The chapter on older women by Sylvia Vatuk is enlightening. Social Gerontology as an academic and political field is growing almost as fast as its elderly population but it lacks historical perspective. This dimension of female aging needs to be kept in mind when discussing policy implication of aging, be it in the matter of strengthening the capabilities of the family or public measures.

The volume compels social scientists to explore fresh themes and adopt new approaches. The book has a vast canvas, specific themes range from discussions of peasantry and the formation of new classes to climate and famine; from nationalism and shifting identities to modernisation, globalisation and economic growth; from childhood and old age in India to the relevance of epics and autobiographies; and from assessments of Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar to secularism, pluralism and human rights. Rarely does one come across a strikingly different book as this, which provides a breadth of freshness and stimulating invitation to hitherto uncharted areas.

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