

Book Reviews

Overseas Development Administration. *A Guide to Social Analysis for Projects in Developing Countries.* London: HMSO. 1995. viii+248 pages. Hardbound. £18.95.

This book, hereinafter referred to as the *Guide*, has been developed for those social analysts (e.g., anthropologists, sociologists, and human geographers) who have had little or no practical experience in applying their knowledge as development practitioners.

In the past, development projects would be analysed from a narrow financial and economic perspective. But with the evolution of thinking on development, this narrow financial and economic aspect has now been broadened to include the impact on society as the very meaning of development has now come to symbolise social change. Thus, development is not restricted only to plans and figures; the human environment in its entirety is now considered for analysis while designing and implementing development projects.

The book is divided into two parts: Part One is entitled "Guide to Social Analysis" and Part Two is called "Resources for Social Analysis". The first part, which has seven chapters, details the reasons why this book has become necessary. In particular, social issues are identified and investigated. It has now become self-evident that development projects are part of society with a dynamics of its own. Therefore, such projects will impinge on society by bringing about social change of some magnitude. The social analyst, for whom this book has been written, has to ensure that the development projects undertaken maximise social welfare. Similarly, when investigating social issues, social analysts are required to research into the background of the projects, the data needed, and the resolution of problems that may arise from time to time by using a number of methodologies outlined in the *Guide*.

Two further chapters in Part One deal with the issue of designing projects and assessing the achievements of such projects. A well-designed and well-implemented project raises social welfare, which is the objective of the work of any social analyst. In short, the first part of the *Guide* spells out the duties and responsibilities of social analysts through different stages of the project cycle: from inception to appraisal, and finally to evaluation.

Part Two of the *Guide* consists of three major sections plus a note on bibliographic resources. The most important section is the one on social development checklists. These checklists cover the subjects of Education, Health, Housing, Family Planning, Irrigation, Power, Roads, Water Supply and Waste Disposal, Crops and Livestock, Fisheries, Forestry Resettlement, and Tourism. These checklists have been

based on the matrix of social processes as outlined in Chapter 3 of Part One of the *Guide*. The social processes concerned are improvement or impoverishment of livelihoods, access to or exclusion from resources, expansion or reduction of knowledge, and participation in or alienation from rights (p. 35 of the *Guide*).

The second section of Part Two of the *Guide* discusses project frameworks and shows how these can be used to further strengthen the design and implementation of development projects, by highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the project in question. Section three of Part Two of the *Guide* examines the role of women in development. This section highlights the problems to be avoided in development projects that affect women. In other words, the assumptions about projects have to be realistic.

The section on bibliographic resources is a first attempt at listing the research material in the area of social analysis. For convenience, this section has been subdivided into four parts: the first deals with "Overviews" which consist of a listing of major works that would appeal to social analysts. The second part is the "Practices" section which lists books and articles that are of use in a practical sense to those involved in development work. The third part lists a number of case studies drawn from different areas of the world. These case studies are of the successes and failures of various development projects. The fourth and final part of the section on bibliographic resources highlights information on the indexing services for current literature that exist in a number of British development organisations.

This book follows a couple of earlier publications of the Overseas Development Administration, such as *Planning Development Projects* (1983) and *The Evaluation of Aid Projects and Programmes* (1984), which deal with issues in development aid. As such, the *Guide*, along with the earlier two books, makes for a comprehensive framework in which projects can be appraised and evaluated. Also, the *Guide* can be considered to be an improvement as it encourages an interdisciplinary approach to assessing development projects. This is an important acknowledgement because economists do not have a monopoly on knowledge about development and what lies behind it. The process of development involves many perspectives which have significant social outcomes, and if these are not recognised, the very basis of development becomes endangered. To sum up, the *Guide* will enable development practitioners to improve their understanding of the development process by having better identification, preparation, appraisal, and implementation of projects in Third World countries. It should be made essential reading for administrators of aid programmes at both ends.

Mir Annice Mahmood

Pakistan Institute of
Development Economics,
Islamabad.