

Shorter Notices

Mukul Sharma (ed.). *Improving People's Lives: Lessons in Empowerment from Asia*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003. 208 pages. Paperback. Indian Rs 280.00.

Autonomous institutions, owned and operated by private citizens for the common good—and constituted under the law with rights and responsibilities, including the legal right to challenge government directives—originated in Asia with the British Empire and its dual legacies of the rule of law and private property upheld by a state limited in its prerogatives. The idea was to keep taxes and government interference at the minimum level, consistent with the efficient delivery of the state's core functions of law and order and financial administration. This assured, grants-in-aid, local bodies, and the like helped support the private sector in the delivery of welfare services. *Improving People's Lives: Lessons in Empowerment from Asia* is a collection of four articles that review the post-colonial development experience. The articles, from the first to the last, evaluate the rural support programme in Pakistan, the Women's Centre for Change in Malaysia, Tamil estate workers in Sri Lanka, and capacity building. In the decades since de-colonisation, the number of NGOs has increased rapidly. Many of these are financed through external assistance and draw funds from their national governments. Some of them do indeed work honestly towards the implementation of their charters and they do a creditable job in the process. The contributors to the volume share their experiences and their understanding of the requirements for successful intervention, and of a more positive relationship with both state and society. (Ilhan Niaz)

Jyoti Parikh and Hemant Datye (eds.). *Sustainable Management of Wetlands—Biodiversity and Beyond*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003. 444 pages. Hardback. Indian Rs 650.00.

The argument that unites the twelve articles in *Sustainable Management of Wetlands: Biodiversity and Beyond* is that India needs a comprehensive policy for the conservation of its wetlands. In order for such a policy to be successful, however, it is vital that it incorporate both social and natural scientific analyses as the amphibious ecosystem of the wetlands sustains millions of animals, plants, and people. Its neglect has to stop. An interesting feature of the book is that the contributors, instead of declaring the wetlands to be invaluable and appealing to moral absolutes and sentimentality, have tried to put an economic value on the potential for sustainable management as well as the likely costs of neglect. The logic of this approach is pragmatic. There is, after all, a greater chance of something being done if it can be demonstrated that the economic costs of inertia exceed those of

corrective measures. Implicit in this position is the realisation that the longer the wetlands are allowed to deteriorate, the resource requirement for effective countermeasures will increase while the likely benefit diminishes. Thus, the sooner a remedial action is taken, the lower the cost and the greater the benefit.

The first chapter provides a general overview of the conditions and potential of Indian wetlands, and defines the conceptual and geographical parameters of the issue. The second, third, and fourth chapters deal with issues specific to mapping techniques, coral reefs, and mangroves. Chapters five, seven, and ten cover the economic valuation and management of wetland ecosystems. Chapters six, nine, and twelve deal with broader policy issues, provide recommendations, and outline a national wetland strategy. As can be expected from a volume that brings together the insights of both natural scientists and social scientists to address an environmental issue, a great many tables and figures are used to complement and strengthen the main text. These useful additions range from cost-benefit analyses to value scores taken from tourists. *Sustainable Management of Wetlands* is a sound attempt to treat complex issue holistically. (Ilhan Niaz)

David W. Crowell. *The SEWA Movement and Rural Development: The Banaskantha and Kutch Experience*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003. 236 pages. Paperback. Indian Rs 280.00.

SEWA is the acronym for the Self-employed Women's Association. At present, the organisation has about two hundred and twenty thousand members, sixteen sister organisations, including its own bank and numerous development projects. A defining characteristic of SEWA is the fact that three out of four members live and work in the rural areas.

The SEWA Movement and Rural Development: The Banaskantha and Kutch Experience was written by David Corwell following a one-year Fulbright Fellowship in 1999-2000, during which he had the opportunity to visit India. The book is based on personal experiences, and were it not for the limitations imposed by its topic, it could have made a much more interesting and useful read with a fairly broad appeal. Within the limitations imposed by the topic, however, Crowell, does well to relate his experiences to the general conditions prevalent in India. A particularly important aspect of these conditions is India's imbalanced male-female ratio, which stands at 1000 males to 932 females. The tragedy of the situation is felt in Banaskantha where 116,414 women 'are missing' as they fall victim to 'infanticide due to their gender, or died young of malnutrition and neglect in favour of older or younger brothers' (page 23). In spite of social practices with the cumulative impact of genocide, and thanks in part to SEWA, women have achieved important successes. Many are sustainably employed, receive small loans, have adopted productivity-enhancing techniques, improved their family life, and have actively participated in disaster

relief. These are no mean achievements given the general apathy of the government and the often numbing conservatism of India's rural life. (Ilhan Niaz)

Stuart Gillespie and Lawrence J. Haddad. *The Double Burden of Malnutrition in Asia: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003. 235 pages. Paperback. Indian Rs 280.00.

The Double Burden of Malnutrition in Asia: Causes, Consequences, and Solutions is the outcome of a collaborative effort between the Asian Development Bank and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) at Washington, D. C. It helps understanding of the incidence, causes, and results of malnutrition in Asia, and highlights the contradiction that despite impressive economic growth rates, the continent has the largest number of underfed people in the world. The authors do well to recognise the limitations of economic analysis in coping with what, above all else, is an indicator of human misery. They observe that qualitative improvements in intellect and morale, as well as quantifiable benefits such as reduced expenditure on health-care and a longer working life, can accrue to a society willing to make the requisite effort to banish hunger.

The seven chapters of the book come as close as it is possible in one volume to treat the issue of malnutrition in an empirically and morally satisfactory manner. The first chapter places the problem in a historical context; the second articulates remedies; the third, strategies; the fourth, indirect means; the fifth outlines factors such as politics, culture, and economics that need to be taken into consideration for policy implementation; the sixth examines the case for public sector involvement; and the seventh concludes and defines priority areas for further action. In addition to the main text, there are sixty-one boxes and figures, and twenty-three tables. These convey facts about phenomena ranging from the incidence of obesity and low weight to GDP growth rates, age ratios, and country groupings based on key indicators. It is well written, highly informative, and factors in real issues such as culture and politics that affect policy decisions and budget allocations. (Ilhan Niaz)

Rehana Jhabvala, Ratna M. Sudarshan, and Jeemol Unni (eds.). *Informal Economy Center Stage: New Structures of Employment*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003. 250 pages. Hardback. Indian Rs 495.00.

Informal Economy Center Stage: New Structures of Employment is a collection of eight articles thematically linked by the realisation that the informal sector is a major and expanding component of the Indian economy. It generates jobs, savings, investments, and, by enhancing consumption, contributes to the tax base as about four-fifths of India's revenues are generated by indirect taxation. Without the informal sector, there can be little doubt that unemployment, poverty, and the income gap between the upper and lower classes would be worse than it is at present.

The introductory chapter establishes basic conceptual parameters, such as the definitions of informality and productive boundary, and explores the linkages between the informal sector and economic growth. The second chapter estimates the size of employment in the informal sector and categorises it in groups. Chapters three, six, and eight are case studies dealing with Gujarat's ceramic industry, a survey of five thousand households for six employment classes, and the experiences of the Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA), respectively. The three remaining chapters use sophisticated economic analysis tools and data sources to explore the relationship between gender, poverty, and informal sector employment, the contribution of this sector to National Accounts, and the need for enhancing social security. The writing is generally competent; the language is not unduly technical. The articles are well-edited, and the organisation facilitates comprehension. It would have been helpful to have a concluding chapter bringing together the insights and perspectives of the editors and contributors. (Ilhan Niaz)

Vashuda Dhagamwar, Subrata De, and Nikhil Verma. *Industrial Development and Displacement: The People of Korba*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003. 383 pages. Hardback. Indian Rs 590.00.

Most of the literature exploring the links between economic development and the displacement of indigenous communities focuses on dams, highways, waterworks, and natural oil and gas fields. The controversy over big dams, in particular, has repeatedly made headlines in the Subcontinent, attracted a great deal of media coverage, and generated fearsome debates between the opponents and the proponents. *Industrial Development and Displacement: The People of Korba* is very different from the other contributions to the debate on 'development versus people's rights'. No celebrities have descended upon Korba, a poor locale in central India; no politicians have raised slogans about its people's rights, nor have most Indians even heard of the place. Korba, however, has experienced the displacement of its indigenous inhabitants not by dramatic gestures but through the initiation of industrialisation in the area. The results, so far, have been that the locals have lost employment opportunities to better-educated outsiders, their natural environment has been polluted by the industries, and slowly, but steadily, the acquisition of land by the industrialists has pushed an increasing proportion of the people off their ancestral properties.

This detailed study of the process of displacement serves to provide a model that can be applied to other parts of India where industrial development has begun to take place over the past ten or fifteen years. The number of Indians facing the end of their livelihoods and status because of industrial development is probably many times great than the numbers disturbed by dams and mega-development projects. (Ilhan Niaz)