

that it includes some truly praiseworthy analytical endeavours.

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People's Initiative for Sustainable Development: Lessons of Experience. Edited by Syed Abdus Samad, Tatsuya Watanabe, Seung-Jin Kim. Kuala Lumpur: Asian And Pacific Development Centre, 1995. 470 pp. ***Seeds 2: Supporting Women's Work around the World.*** Edited by Ann Leonard. New York: The Feminist Press, 1995. 241 pp.

Both books reviewed here share a common theme: the practical strategies for successful development. They both use international case studies to evaluate the factors critical to the success of development efforts. Not surprisingly, they find much common ground, notably in stressing local self-initiative and self-financing, economic viability and the necessity of shifting decision-making as well as clearly defined responsibilities to the community level. The book titles seem to reflect a difference in focus, the environment and women respectively, but a closer look reveals that any assessment of development strategies has to include both these issues simultaneously.

The first book resulted from a project by the Asian and Pacific Development Centre (APDC) "Building Operational Strategies of Sustainable Development Upon People's Initiatives". The volume is divided into four parts. Part I contains case studies from seven Asian countries — Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. All seven papers follow the same structure with sections on resource management and conservation, people's initiatives and participation, human resource development, institutional arrangements and policies and scope for scaling up.

The common headings and uniform structure in the first seven chapters facilitate the comparison and emphasize the points shared by all seven

papers. Unfortunately, some authors are unable to present their findings within this framework. The results are all too often contents that do not match the respective headings, repetitions and obvious attempts to fill given sections. It does not help that the first part lacks editing as it contains serious grammatical errors, frequent spelling mistakes and in some parts even unintelligible English, most notably in the papers on Nepal and Sri Lanka.

It is a pity that these avoidable flaws detract from the valuable lessons presented in these seven case studies. They show that successful resource management is based not merely on the involvement but on the initiative and strength of local communities. Development agents, notably non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies and donors, should refrain from trying to implement their own agendas and focus on their role as catalysts, morale boosters and providers of bottleneck resources such as health care, basic education, training and initial credit. Programmes that rely on permanent external aid are doomed to failure. The authors share the view that external financial resources could serve as a starting point for revolving funds or other development schemes but that local financial resources have to be mobilized by encouraging internal savings schemes to make programmes self-sustaining.

The success of the projects presented in this book can be attributed to the people's ability to build strong institutions with clear rules regarding decision-making, sharing of benefit/burden and conflict management based on participation, transparency, accountability and discipline. Group formation as well as its functioning is facilitated if the members of the community concerned are homogeneous and therefore share not only established forms of communication and decision-making but also common interests. Project size is therefore critical: on the one hand, groups must be small enough to allow full participation and ensure democratic decision-making and efficient management, but they also have to correspond with the boundaries of the critical natural resources, for example a watershed. As the case from Thailand shows, resource management is a

challenge if different ethnic communities occupy various ecological zones of the same critical and scarce resource, and impose externalities on one another.

The four chapters of Part II synthesize the seven case studies by focusing on human resource development at the community level, people's initiatives and participation, resource conservation and management and institutional arrangement and scaling up of grassroots efforts. Although the idea to sum up the essence of the country studies is commendable, the papers again lack the standard one would expect from an international publication. "Human Resource Development at the Community Level" by Mohamed Ariff, despite being well written, appears to have been put together in a haste. Seong-Lin Na's extremely short chapter on "Peoples' Initiatives and Participation" is marred by bad English and many typing errors — two alone in the first line of the paper — and again seems to be extracted from previously published works. The author draws up five categories which he promises to discuss — extent and forms of people's initiatives and participation, women's participation, integration of the underprivileged, inclusion of minorities and role of NGOs — but then fails to elaborate on these aspects at all. He presents a potentially useful table showing the involvement of government, NGOs and locals and the (non)success of the seven cases but frequently resorts to a question mark indicating "difficult to judge" or leaves the relevant sections blank. It is a mystery why he singles out Indonesia and Nepal as failures. Being the core topic of the book, the issue of people's initiatives and participation is worthy of more substance than three sloppily produced pages.

Instead of presenting a synthesis of the country papers regarding "Resource Conservation and Management", Ramakrishnan criticizes the case studies for their lack of detail and data. Considering the quite extensive, sometimes unnecessarily long first seven chapters, his critique seems unfounded. Again, the paper misses the chance to contribute valuable lessons that could have easily been drawn from what was presented in the seven case studies.

A better summary on "Institutional Arrangements and Scaling Up of Grassroots Efforts" was provided by Tatsuya Watanabe. As core principles of sustainable people-centered development he identifies local control, equity, inclusiveness and a holistic view as well as discipline. His suggestions for the operational strategy include decentralization, a suitable legal framework, collaborate fora, equal partnership between the groups involved, diversification, appropriate technology development, proper training and the selection of an appropriate operational unit and boundary. Unfortunately, not even the editor of the volume himself took enough care in preparing his paper. His tables had several misplaced entries and the author refers to boxes and dotted boxes which cannot be found in the paper but are obviously left-overs from another paper.

Parts III and IV of the book contain nine chapters on "Leading Issues" covering economics, aid, government policies and legal framework, sustainable institutions, scope and limit of the market, technology, trade, rural development in the Asian context and organization building, and a final chapter on "Operational Strategy" (Part IV). Regarding their formal standard, these chapters fare much better than the first part. However, only few of the papers try to link with the country studies. Mohamed Ariff's chapter "Economics of Environmentally Sustainable Development" is a balanced view of the relationship between economics and the environment, but with it being very general and theoretical, the relevance to the case studies is difficult to see. The paper on "Aid in Support of People's Initiatives" by Perez-Corral, Ravanera and Quizon is overly ideological with a strong anti-Western, anti-establishment bias and few links to either the environment or the case studies. Their demand that donors should in no way interfere with the decisions of the community is unrealistic and assumes a high integrity of local communities which is never critically challenged. De Silva's chapter on "Government Policies and Legal Frameworks" is a valuable contribution to the book. It is well-written, balanced and attempts to refer to the countries featured in the case studies. In contrast, Gupta's paper on "Sustainable

Institutions” is not only very long with too many examples and a rather poetic style, but it clearly lacks structure. The chapter by Jomo and Chang on “The Scope and Limitation of the Market” looks at the rural sector and its links to the national and global economy and the environmental implications of market and policy failures. They realize that the complete preservation of social and cultural diversity is impossible and suggest a next-best alternative with democratic self-determination of communities within an economic and political framework that internalizes environmental costs. Makkapati and Pillai’s paper on “Sustainable and Manageable Technology (SMT) Development” demands a shift to need-driven, affordable and socially as well as ecologically sound technologies that make use of local knowledge and resources. Their assessment of the inhibiting factors and the strategies to promote SMT is eye-opening even though it suffers from one-sidedness in completely denying any positive aspects of modern technology. Seong-Lin Na’s chapter on “Trade and Environment” shows a balanced view and clarity but again lacks any links to the case studies. In his second paper of this book, Ramakrishnan writes on “Sustainable Rural Development with People’s Participation in the Asian Context”. The paper is well written and discloses the ecological, economic, social and cultural dimension of sustainable development. However, the author does not look at the Asian Context as indicated in the title, but focuses mainly on Indian case studies. In the last of the nine chapters of Part III, Tatsuya Watanabe reflects on “Viable Organisation Building for Sustainable Development”. His concise paper looks both at the formation, growth and survival of people’s organizations and the desired roles and qualities of development agents.

Part IV contains Watanabe’s final chapter on “Strategies” in which he first establishes the guiding principles for people-centred sustainable development before drawing up an operational strategy. In doing so, he summarizes the preceding chapters.

One cannot help but have mixed feelings about this book. Without a doubt, the case studies

provide valuable lessons. The focus on people’s initiatives instead of externally planned and executed development schemes is also timely. But the apparent haste in publishing and the resulting lack of editing spoil the efforts. Moreover, Part III does not blend well into the book. It would have been wiser to split the book and publish the case studies together with Parts II and IV and leave Part III for a separate volume. Both books on their own would have been substantial enough if edited with care.

The second book *Seeds 2: Supporting Women’s Work around the World* presents seven papers describing case studies from developing and developed countries preceded by a balanced introduction by Martha Chen and rounded off by five afterwords, all written by women. If one had expected a rather ideological male-bashing book by a publisher named “The Feminist Press”, the book is surprisingly moderate, non-ideological and well-written, and it actually complements the case studies of the first book quite well. A common feature of both books is the focus on the empowerment of the powerless. However, whereas the first book is very one-sided in glorifying collective efforts, *Seeds 2* is more balanced in acknowledging the importance of the individual and the limits of collective approaches.

The importance of credit arrangements, education, health care and training already mentioned in the first book, is pointed out in detail. Again the lesson is that charity is not needed but rather contractual relationships based on responsibility and economic viability. Services by development agents work best if they are provided for a fee, albeit low.

Women have a greater stake in resource management than men as they are responsible for the daily provision of food, water and shelter, increasingly without the help of a male head of household. However, the book shows that by joining forces women can be mobilized if given encouragement, health care, education and basic technical and managerial training as well as support in developing arrangements for child care, marketing efforts and credit systems that suit their specific needs. Working together, women can

demand access to mainstream activities even in societies with a traditional bias against women in public life. Surprisingly, such attitudes — often regarded as a main inhibiting factor — proved to be less of a problem than logistics, staffing and access to resources.

The inclusion of a case study on the United States shows that women need support in developed countries as well. The excellent chapter on child care with contributions from various authors provides unconventional ideas for women not only in the Third World but also in developed

countries where mothers try to juggle family responsibilities with a career.

Seeds 2 is an optimistic, encouraging book with very practical advice on how to translate concepts into workable strategies. It is a prime example of a highly readable and well-balanced publication that is useful both for scholars and practitioners.

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