

*Rural Development in Asia: Case Studies on Programme Implementation.* Edited by G. Shabbir Cheema. New Delhi: Sterling Publishing, 1985. 268 pp.

Planned national strategies for rural development have passed through three broad stages in developing societies. They started with a phase of community development during the early 1960s, giving way in the 1970s to a period of accelerated agricultural growth, and finally leading to the strategy of integrated rural development currently in vogue. The book under review deals with the middle phase of the 1970s and with those regional development programmes in Asian countries in which special attention was paid to the decentralized administration of the projects. The case studies included in the book were initiated by the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) in Nagoya, and were carried out by experts affiliated with administrative planning institutes in China, Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. I will summarize and comment on the studies of Southeast Asian countries

Gabriel Iglesias of the College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines, made a case study of the Provincial Development Assistance Project (PDAP) implemented in the province of Pangasinan of the Philippines. PDAP was designed with the help of USAID to increase agricultural production and to improve infrastructure facilities of various provinces, but because of its stress on infrastructure and the use of capital-intensive instruments the programme disproportionately favoured the rich.

Chakrit Noranitpadungkarn of the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Bangkok, discusses the Rural Employment Generation Programme in Thailand by taking a northern province, Lampang, as his case study. A decentralized authority from the national government, it focused on building infrastructure (and providing employment), but was often bogged down by administrative mismanagement as different programme agencies were controlled by their respective headquarters in Bangkok and were not able to integrate at the provincial level.

Another provincial development programme in East Java with a focus on small-scale village credit was studied by Moeljarto Tjokrowinoto of the Rural Regional Study Centre, University of Yogyakarta. The government was able to reach almost all the beneficiaries but the programme was "top-down" and the resources earmarked made up only a small percentage of development expenditure. Thus, the impact was minimal.

Efforts to improve marketing facilities for small farmers were initiated in Malaysia by the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA), and are the focus of a case study carried out by Mohd. Nor Abdul Ghani of the Malaysian Administrative Manpower Planning Unit (MAMPU). The assumption was that an effective marketing system would reduce dependency of poor Malay farmers on Chinese middlemen, and thus would improve their incomes. However, the FAMA officials at the district and state levels did not have viable linkages with either government agencies or with the target groups and hence remained ineffective.

All the case studies included in the book are academically and methodologically well prepared. Their importance is not in bringing any far-reaching new insights into focus but in offering programme- and country-specific details. The case studies, however, neither situate the studied programmes in the overall rural development context of the Asian countries nor do they take any strong positions. The details concerning positive and negative aspects of the programmes are provided in a cool and dispassionate manner. Nowhere is it mentioned by any of the writers or the editor that enormous amounts of time, energy and resources in Asia have been wasted in these centrally controlled and foreign-guided programmes (often

mistakenly termed “decentralized”), but really no radical sustainable improvement has come about in the lives of the majority of the people. To me the book is a curious and unstimulating reflection of mainstream scholarship.

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*Technology Choice in Developing Countries: The Textile and Pulp and Paper Industries.* By Michael A. Amsalem, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1983. 240 + xvi pp.

The issue of technology choice in the manufacturing sector of developing countries is important for several reasons. The absorptive capacity of other sectors — especially agriculture — is limited. In many countries the record of employment generation is a poor one, despite rapid industrialization since the late 1960s. Moreover, as more countries adopt outward-looking policies, international competitiveness requires the adoption of efficient technologies which accord with the exporting countries' relative factor endowments. Although there is already a very large literature on the subject, a careful and thorough study — as this book is — is to be welcomed.

The purpose of this book is to examine technology choice in the manufacturing sectors of Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia and the Philippines. The author seeks to establish whether alternative technologies exist; whether, if there are differences, they require significantly different quantities of factor inputs; and what factors underlie the selection of technologies. To narrow the focus, the analysis is conducted with reference to the textile and pulp and paper industries. This choice of industries is very appropriate, since the two differ in important respects. Textiles is an “old” industry in which labour costs are a substantial proportion of total costs, a wide range of technologies is available and most can be purchased “off the shelf”, and much of the industry has relocated to developing countries. None of these characteristics apply fully to the pulp and paper industry.

The author begins with a review of the main issues in technology choice, followed by a brief (rather too brief) review of existing studies. An adaptation index is developed, as a means of assessing technology differences between countries. Discussion of the firm survey and some conceptual issues complete the chapter. Next, in Chapter 2, there is a very detailed review of production and technology characteristics in the two industries.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the textile industry. The author demonstrates convincingly that a wide range of textile technologies does exist at each of the major stages of production (see, for example, Table 3.3, pp. 62–63). He also concludes that there is considerable modification of technology: “In 95 of this study's 110 technology observations in developing countries the technology chosen was more labour-intensive than the U.S. optimum at identical scale of production.” But in many cases, these technologies are more capital-intensive than the socially optimal ones. Why? The familiar factor-price-distortion argument is one factor, but there are others, including lack of information, the effects of risk, and the absence of competitive market pressures.

In a similar vein, the author then analyses the pulp and paper industry. Industry attributes dictate a somewhat different approach, however. Scale rather than relative factor