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Book Reviews


Any doubts a reader might have about whether economics could be an exact science are likely to be strengthened by reading the former of these documents. Published by the World Bank, it is, not surprisingly, an apologia for the policies of economic 'structural adjustment' currently favoured by the Bank. It sets out to outline economic trends in sub-Saharan Africa 1985-7, with some reference to the figures that were available for 1988 at the date of publication, and to some of the broader context. Within this context it then tries to draw some conclusions about the effects of adjustment.

However, the fluctuations in the export prices of primary products, on which these countries largely depend, and in exchange rates, make aggregating figures for a group of countries a dubious process. The authors admit that taking Nigeria's figures at 1980 or 1987 exchange rates would give two very different aggregate pictures for the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. Both, we may conclude, would be, in different ways, misrepresentations of how people are affected, even in Nigeria. The fluctuations in prices of primary products, with oil as a special but not unique case, severely limit the value of any comparison of figures from only two or three successive years.

The authors recognise this point and make some reference to trends since 1970, arguing that the fluctuations in oil prices since then obscure underlying trends. Thus export volumes, export income, and terms of trade aggregated across the region all show a decline in the period 1980-87, but an improvement compared to 1970. Even here the dangers of aggregating are apparent, since terms of trade for the group of poorest countries dropped 40% in the 1970s and remained at that low level since 1980. The report, naturally, concentrates on where it can detect growth in terms that interest its sponsors.

The report notes that, despite the prices having dropped less than those of other underdeveloped countries since 1975, Africa's share of the world market in non-oil primary product exports has dropped since 1970. If this is meant as an argument for adjustment, the authors have clearer ideas about what adjustment will do for national economies than for people. For example, while they report that real producer prices of agricultural products have risen with adjustment, they note with less emphasis that this increase has favoured non-food crops. While agricultural exports increased quite rapidly in the era of adjustment, 1985-7, per capita food production merely ceased to decline over this period, a drop in 1987 cancelling gains in the previous two years.

As for financial concerns, they report that aid flows have increased to those countries with strong adjustment programmes - but does this mean any more than that those who pay the piper are more generous when their tune is played? Debt service burdens were reduced on aggregate over 1986-7, but not for the poorest countries.

Terms of trade have improved for the countries without adjustment programmes, while they have continued to deteriorate for those with adjustment. It is worth examining not only what is presented, but how it is presented. For example, a little reading between the lines, and use of a pocket calculator, show that, from the figures given, poorest countries have suffered the greatest loss in unit price for their exports and in bulk of exports - so one of the prime prescriptions, reducing export prices, does not work for them. A table compares how several economic indicators have been affected by adjustment programmes, and
divides countries which have not suffered strong shocks such as famine, drought or war from ‘all
countries’. Comparing those which suffered such shocks with those which did not may not give
rigorously exact results, but it is clear that adjustment programmes reduce the ability to weather the effect
of shocks on GDP and gross domestic investment. While countries suffering such shocks show the least
decline in per capita consumption over the period 1980-7, and better GDP growth than those with reform
programmes and shocks, or with no adjustment and no shocks, and possibly even better than those with
adjustment and no shocks. They also seem to have done better in terms of export volume than those with
strong shocks and strong adjustment programmes, or than those without such adjustment which suffered
no shocks.

The second document, The Challenge of Hunger in Africa, although it is subtitled A Call to
Action, does not offer a clear course of action to ensure food security at all. It lists a wide range of
possible actions, without detailed guidance on which might work in which circumstances, and comes
down to admitting that food relief programmes may well be necessary during periods of ‘structural
adjustment’. For proof that ‘adjustment’ offers long term solutions, we must look elsewhere, perhaps
to Africa’s adjustment and growth, but we would search there in vain. On the contrary, figures now
available for the OECD countries (quoted in Westlake, 1989), where there is long experience of
‘adjustment’, shows that those which have ‘adjusted’ have done less well in terms of employment, output
and consumer prices.

A worrying implication of this publication is that food relief may be offered to countries in
difficulties on condition that ‘structural adjustment’ is accepted. But if the adjustment results, as seems
likely, in increasing acreage and investment given over to export crops, rapidly dropping export prices
and export volumes either decreasing or not increasing to match decrease in unit prices, will the apostles
of ‘adjustment’ continue to give food relief to these basket cases?

Reviewed by Brian MacGarry, Silveira House, Harare.

Reference

Planning for Basic Needs: A Soft Option or a Solid Policy. A Basic Needs Simulation Model

This book by Rolph van der Hoeven is yet another piece of important research to be published under the
International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) World Employment Programme (WEP) since its pathbreaking
conference in 1976. The ILO Mission to Kenya had, in 1972, stated that:

“We identify the main problem as one of employment rather than unemployment. By this we mean
that in addition to people who are not earning incomes at all, there is another - and in Kenya more
numerous - group of people, who we call the “working poor”.

However, at the 1976 WEP Conference, it was realised that just the employment strategy by itself was
not enough, but that (p31):

“employment issues are intimately connected to the wider issues of poverty and inequality, and it
is in this context that they need to be examined”.

Van der Hoeven’s intention is not to provide a defence of the BNA, but rather to show how it can
be used as a basis for planning the development of a particular developing economy: Kenya. He,
therefore develops a Basic Needs Simulation Model and applies it to Kenya. In order to sell the model,
he has to convince people that BNA is a viable option. He therefore considers the various criticisms
against BNA. He considers a serious objection to be provided by Deepak Hall (1983) who argues that basic needs policies lead to more state influence, and arrives at an erroneous conclusion that state involvement is anti economic growth. The 1976 WEP Conference Report stated that (p53):

“A major strategic choice is that between an essentially public and an essentially private productive sector. It should be noted, however, that this has little to do with the controversy between planning and the price mechanism.”

This statement in a way cushions the proponents of BNA against the neoclassical group as represented by Hall. In developing the model, Van der Hoeven separates basic needs into those provided through public services and those provided through private consumption. Basic needs like education and health are provided through public means while others like nutrition are “exclusively a matter of private expenditure.” He, therefore, sees no contradiction between the creation of a ‘public sector’ in the national economy and the BNA, but is also clearly against the centralisation of decision-making powers in the economic sphere. On this point, there appears to exist nothing but an apparent disagreement between BNA and Hall’s school. The message from the proponents of BNA is really that it is only by decentralising government actions that the needs of the poor are satisfied in the best possible way.

A major weakness of BNA is its failure to, as it were, incorporate a class analysis. As a result, the approach is concerned more with a large group called ‘the poor’. This is, however, an attempt to fill an intellectual and ideological gap left by the demise of growth and employment creating strategies. It therefore attempts to integrate the growing demands for progressive transformation in countries like Kenya with the overall development requirements. For the BNA group, the growing socioeconomic problems of developing countries are caused by an incorrect organisation of economic processes, and not by the contradictions in the existing mode of production.

As a strategy of development, BNA is, however, a significant improvement on the the limited growth orthodoxy framework. As Van der Hoeven puts it, BNA is concerned more with the supply side of the problem, and can therefore contribute positively to the process of adjustment. The difficulty is, therefore, how to move from this theoretical level to a practical approach that can effectively deal with the complex socioeconomic development problems that bedevil many developing countries. In the third chapter, he brings us to the ground when he gives a useful overview of the Kenyan economy’s development history.

In Chapter 4 Van der Hoeven zeros in on the input and output indicators of performance, which basically form the basic needs subsystem. To complete the system the demographic subsystem is added in Chapter 5, focusing on such variables as fertility, mortality, migration, labour force participation and population projections for different age groups. In both subsystems major basic needs variables and demographic variables are determined using both accounting and econometric approaches. Both demographic and basic needs variables do have an effect on other parts of the model. As Chapter 5 reveals, such interaction results in changes in the skill composition of the labour force, labour productivity, value added share in gross output, and changing patterns in consumption.

An equilibrium in the factors and goods market is a necessary requirement in the model. The supply of products is determined by the production function while demand is a result of factors such as government demand, private demand, exports and imports, which are expressed in an accounting identity.

Equilibrium should obtain in the goods market. But since the economy is a system, equilibrium must obtain in the forex, labour and capital markets as well. This is in conformity with the general equilibrium approach, which the author discusses in Chapter 9.
The quantitative description of income distribution (log-normal distribution) should not detract from understanding this important issue, along with social accounting and poverty determination.

The results of the model simulation is contained in Part III of the book, and seeing that any model should be tested against the empirical world, the inclusion of this section serves the purpose well. The main structure that could be levelled against the model, is its exclusion of a model of economic growth, explicitly including GDP which should reveal the effects of basic needs and demographic subsystems.

The advantage of the book is that it follows a quantitative approach whose mathematical clarity enhances understanding and possibilities of forecasting and performing sensitivity analysis.

In conclusion, the book makes interesting reading and is a must for all scientists with the development of the Third World at heart. One wishes a “structural adjustment” programme could see economic problems through the Van der Hoeven telescope.

Reviewed by K Mlambo and M Ncube, Department of Economics, University of Zimbabwe, Harare.

References


"Unlike most writings about debt this is fun to read". George says this about one of her own references, but it certainly also applies to her book. Connoisseurs of good rhetoric will like the book for its style and wit.

This book looks at the important international debt problem with erudition and even sometimes a premonitory tone. At the same time, there is a good dose of sarcasm, a modicum of the feminist touch and plenty of juicy anecdotes that add the needed pep and spice to this otherwise serious topic. Neat vignettes, or even many a surprise fact, are told with a fresh "chutzpah" making the book really enjoyable.

The script is packed and takes the reader step by step in unravelling the intricacies of the topic. The language is personal and adorned with colourful adjectives. I particularly enjoyed George’s direct dialogue with the reader. The book needs to be savoured slowly, to better retain all the important information in it.

George is the queen of the fitting metaphors and one-liners in our trade. These are often humorous and related to a vast universal literature - from Churchill, "never before have so few been so wrong with such a devastating effect on so many" (referring to foreign debt), to Hemingway, "never send to know for whom the debt tolls; it tolls for thee". There are also references to the Prophet Mohammed, Hamlet, Hammurabi, Ricardo, Auden and Dante.

In the Introduction, George gives us an insight into the human dimensions and tribulations of writing a book like this one. The book is then divided into three parts - each proceeded by a convenient one page overview - and a Philosophical Afterword. I found the author’s major original input to the debt problem mostly in Parts II ("The People and the Planet") and III ("Now What"). In Part I ("The Players
Chapter 10 ("Debt and the Environment") shows us convincingly how environmental issues become totally marginal when governments face huge debts. As a result, a process of ecocide often follows, with absolutely no sense of solidarity with the future.

There is also a chapter, Chapter 13, on "The View from the South". One wonders if this is a coincidence or a bad omen. This chapter misses reviewing the Marxist viewpoint/s on the debt crisis, which I think would have been indispensable to show the full spectrum of approaches to the problem.

A challenging corollary to the book is the need to provide political and economic counselling (along the lines of that discussed and proposed in the book) to Third World countries and governments negotiating with the World Bank or the IMF. How to set up such an international consulting body (something that the World Food Assembly, to whom the book is dedicated, had proposed two years ago) still remains an untackled challenge to radicalised development professionals that agree with the book's theses. Also, in my opinion, the book softly endorses or is too condescending with the "human face antipoverty adjustment" movement which I think is delaying the more lasting structural changes needed to revert the further pauperisation of the poor in the world.

In the introduction to Chapter 14, the "3-D Solution" to the debt crisis, there is an excellent geopolitical overview of US policy towards debt that I thought was very enlightening. George also effectively introduces a new optic on the debt problem, namely that indebted countries have actually two major problems: to pay back and to obtain new money. She does not believe debt should be cancelled. Unconditional writeoffs would reward the Mobutus and Pinochets, penalising the more prudent countries and leaders, and would give the West a perfect excuse to cut-off all aid (see Moore Lappe, 1983), and would drop the credit worthiness of debtor countries to zero.

The author tells us that Third World social and political creativity, through grassroots movements, is the big unwritten story of this decade, and she gives numerous examples of this and places great hope on this encouraging development. The real centrepiece behind this development is that debt could be used to promote democracy and real development, if the cards are played right. No crisis, not even one of debt, is a crisis for everyone. The elite of debtor countries still profit from IMF adjustment programmes. The unemployment these programmes create also allows local employers to pay their workers less, especially when privatisation is part of the deal. Oppression and injustice, then, lie behind debt-induced poverty. The upper classes are sheltered from Fund-generated misery. In short, debtors are governed by people who benefit from the present arrangements.

Our author also introduces the concept of "Creative Reimbursement" in cash and in kind. The question is whether the applicability of this concept is utopian or realistic. It is also noted that what matters is not just the money that can be saved by not servicing the debt, but how and for what the money saved is used.

Other new concepts include "pre-1980 (discounted) commodity dollars", and a new "special currency" to be used to pay back foreign loans to the IMF and the World Bank. Although it may sound presumptuous, George also proposes a possible set of solutions to do with the flight of capital problem in the Third World.

The closing remarks to the book, before the Philosophical Afterword, have, surprisingly, no subtitle and the author again dialogues with the reader in a very personal style. The Philosophical Afterword which I had the privilege to read before publication of the book, through the courtesy of the author, was undoubtedly better than the one I now find in the book. Nevertheless, I still think this last portion of the
book is very fitting. It distils the intellectual message underlying our often indifferent behaviour towards the issues of underdevelopment. It is like the book's Alter Ego looking into issues such as scientific paradigms and their present relevance and limitations, the ideology of development theories and models, the politics and the power structures behind the more global issues in the real world, revolutionary and cosmetic changes towards real development, the futility of hammering on closed minds, and our accountability to the people who suffer. In short, it asks questions that cannot continue to be brushed aside if we are to be consequent and honest with ourselves. (see Schuftan, 1988). All these issues are very pertinent to development workers and need to be more widely discussed. It is thus fully appropriate that George closes this enlightened book with a resounding call to reject inertia and an ostrich's attitude when it comes to facing this international problem that affects us all and will bear on what our children will have to worry about in the 21st century.

Reviewed by Claudio Schuftan, IPS Project, Nairobi, Kenya.

References


In the opening page of this book, Van der Merwe states "Justice is achieved not by enforcing law and order, but by creating a just society whose members are assured of the opportunity to realise their human potential" and, again, "Justice and peace cannot be equated with the maintenance of the status quo in South Africa. Therefore the pursuit of justice and peace implies fundamental social change". He then proceeds to set out in great detail, most objectively and with great sympathy, the many different aspects of the causes of conflict in South Africa. The book examines, in detail, apartheid as a current ideological force, the causes of conflict, violence within the conflict, other manifestations of conflict, and the means which have been used, are being used, and may yet be used, in the handling or resolution of the conflict.

Most often the opinion one hears expressed is that the time for peaceful change in South Africa is long past. It is indeed true that a very high degree of violence already exists in the country, but the majority of the violence is still perpetrated by the agents of the system. It is refreshing therefore to read a book which expresses both faith and hope in the possibility of a negotiated and relatively peaceful end to 'the centuries old' South African problem. This faith and hope is fortunately based on the firm foundation of Van der Merwe's personal 'constructive engagement', and reflects, perhaps, opinions formulated after discussions with all the main actors in the drama, and, indeed, with many of those who take part only in the crowd scenes.

The author shows the changing emphasis of the conflict, from the ideology of separation to the current 'free enterprise versus socialism' thinking. In so doing he shows the part played by the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), both in the promotion of apartheid at the start and its recent withdrawal from it. In October 1986 a resolution adopted at the DRC General Synod moved forward considerably. The relevant portion read "The conviction has gradually grown that a forced separation and division of peoples cannot be considered a Biblical imperative. The attempt to justify such an injunction as derived from the Bible must be recognised as an error and should be rejected". The author does not believe that this will automatically remove racial discrimination from the South African scene, but he does feel that
it will become less important in political maneuverings in future. He discusses the manifestations of conflict and their effect on the overall situation. For example, in relation to the consumer boycotts he says "One of the most important effects of the boycotts was that a new politics of negotiation emerged". Throughout the book, Van der Merwe distinguishes between aspects of conflict and violence, and shows some of the very positive aspects of conflict, how they have been used, and can be used, to bring about real change. He shows quite clearly that conflict will always be there, but that it can be positive and should be harnessed to produce positive change.

Being deeply Christian himself, the author examines the attitude of the Christian churches to the struggle, and the part they play in it. He also underlines the increasing conflict within the Christian conscience concerning the legitimacy of the use of violence in the conflict. "Church leaders are by no means unanimous on the issue of violence and its relationship with liberation. But it is clear that support for the just revolution view will grow. As it does, state-church conflict will escalate".

Seldom is one able to find in one publication such an in-depth study of the unhappy situation in South Africa, in so concise a form. The author not only describes the complex problems faced by the country, but also offers concrete suggestions for their solution. The final sentence in the book reads "Our present task is to work towards constructive accommodation of conflict in our continuing pursuit of justice and peace. I have argued that this is indeed much more likely than popularly perceived". I believe this to be true. As the author suggests in his preface, this is not a source book on South Africa, but, in my view, it is a text book on the conflict in that country which should be considered required reading by those who share the author's hope and faith in the future.


The first chapter slaps you in the face with a forthright challenge to the American psyche to consider their sins of omission and commission. These sins, together with abuse of wealth and power, bring untold misery to millions the world over, and missed opportunities to many American children, especially in the lower classes. The former Attorney-General of the United States of America, Ramsey Clarke, shoots from the hip as he says "I will ask you what prospects you see for a nation that participates in an arms race that is the greatest crime against humanity in history, contributing to it more annually than is available for the sustenance of 60% of the earth's population" (p4). It is from the first chapter that one identifies the feeling of the whole book.

The book is an outcome of a workshop, held in Hawaii, to consider the issues of social work and social justice in the Pacific-Asian region. However, its content has a universal applicability that makes the book both a prophetic message for the future and a scientific guide for the practitioner - the latter being most clear in chapters 3, 5, 6, 9 and 20 which give actual intervention strategies that have been tried out in Hawaii and adjoining areas.

Visions for the Future is divided into 14 chapters, organised in 4 parts. The first part is an overview of the burning issues in social work, now and tomorrow, and builds up a perspective that puts the remaining three parts, which deal with families and children, the elderly and employment, and income security, into one mould. Different as the subjects might sound the book manages to successfully show the differential application of justice and social policy in the United States, and how the questions of ethics and private interest continue to fuel inequality and distort social service provision. The book considers these issues in the US context, and in terms of how they impact on the Pacific-Asian region...
as a whole. This region is defined as the South Pacific Islands, the island chains which make up Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia, Australia and New Zealand, the US Pacific insular jurisdictions, and South, Southeast, and North East Asia - ranging from "impoverished Bangladesh to the awakening giant China and to technologically advanced Japan". One is tempted to wonder if the workshop from which the book came attempted too much in trying to cover so wide and diverse an area.

However, the general relevance and applicability of the subjects, and the information and recommendations, make the book a good reference book for social work education, including casework, family work, community work, social administration, socioeconomics and the use of cross-cultural research. The book is quite interesting to read and brings a vibrant pulse to the field of social work and politics. This makes the book relevant not only to the Pacific-Asian region but also to the Third World in general and to anybody with a sympathy for social justice.

The book begins on a light informal note that is both appetising and informing; with Ramsey Clarke haranguing the reader with such anecdotes as "There was an Oklahoman - I come from Texas - who said that man shifted his ideology from cannibalism to capitalism when he discovered that it is more profitable to exploit your neighbour than to eat him."

As you get into Chapter 2, which considers "Futuristic Considerations in Social Work", more specific implications for social work practice are highlighted, viz the development of a "more holistic, broad-based approach", "change from a remedial to a developmental perspective", "introducing an international/cross-cultural perspective in social work", putting "greater emphasis on interdisciplinary efforts", developing "closer linkages between research and practice", and putting "emphasis on ethical considerations in policy development and practice".

The chapters on family work, children and the elderly get down to the basics of social work. They ask the basic ethical questions of children in foster care and the children of poor families, and their future in a nation "that prioritises guns over human life".

The elderly are considered a major area of work for social work and caregiving in the future Pacific-Asian region. Thus the book gives timely advice on the need to indigenise meanings and approaches to the concepts of "aging, health, illness, trouble and help", and to meet the gap between client needs and service delivery, especially in ethnically plural communities. Also important is the need to close intergenerational gaps and to create special programmes for what are referred to in the book as "geriatric orphans", usually "single males with minimal education or skill training [who have] lost their ties with their families".

The last section on employment and income security looks at the real issues and root causes of the problems highlighted earlier. Midgely, in Chapter 11, raises a lot of questions and issues on the elusive subject of social security, but leaves the subject as open-ended as it currently is. The last chapter is more specific and pedantic, taking up the impact of Reagan's policies on US poverty, employment and income security. This chapter argues about the way “advanced capitalism” thrives on “racist policies”, whether overtly or covertly. Concluding the book on the race issue leaves one asking questions about the role of social work in this problem.

Visions for the Future certainly advocates a new form of social work, but it is perhaps not bold enough to bring out any radical new directions that diverge from current community development and so-called “participatory approaches” that are designed for the people without them. The book skirts over the real issues of the impact of US imperialism in the Pacific-Asian region, and thus skirts with socioeconomic analysis, leaving a lot of questions unanswered. In other words the book sometimes sounds naively objective, for example where it makes blanket comments on the Pacific-Asian region without making a purposive stand for the poor. Thus oil-rich Brunei with a per capita income in excess of US$20 000 is covered together with Vanuatu and Tonga with per-capita incomes between US$30 and $500.

These last comments should not detract too much from this invaluable work of goodwill. They are meant to show the other side of an otherwise excellent piece of work, that would be invaluable for
students, practitioners or scholars in social work. Available in paperback, it should be reasonably affordable. The printing is perfect and the references immense.

Reviewed by Tapiwanashe Vengai, Glen Forest Training Centre, Harare.


**Adolescent Mothers in Later Life** is a longitudinal follow up study of the original Baltimore research described in *Unplanned Parenthood - the Social Consequences of Teenage Childbearing* (1976, and referred to in this publication). The original research studied between 300 - 400 mostly unmarried teenagers, over a 5 year period, who had sought prenatal services in the mid 60's, most of whom were black low income females in their mid teens. The groups' experiences were then compared, in areas such as education, occupation, income, fertility, and marital decisions, with their classmates who had delayed child bearing.

The follow up, carried out in 1983-84, looked at the life courses of over 300 families over three generations, and intended to produce results useful for policy makers and practitioners concerned with the issue of teenage motherhood and its role in the maintenance of an underclass in society. The study also explores the interconnection between a mother's life decisions and her children's 'life course trajectories'.

While in many countries today there is increasing concern over the issue of single mothers and school girl pregnancies, the authors point out that teenage child bearing was never uncommon in the US, although only in the mid-twentieth century did a substantial percentage marry and have children. The prevalence of early parenthood in 1950's, for example, was far more common than today, with nearly half of all women marrying in their teens and a quarter having a first child before 20. However, by 1970 adolescent pregnancy had suddenly emerged as a 'social problem' and increasingly gained wide public concern into the 80's.

The authors see this shift in public attitudes as largely a longstanding demographic change, with adult fertility taking a dramatic plunge (as a result of contraception, easier legislation on abortion, etc) not seen in teenage pregnancy. In addition, with the ascendency of the marriage age in the 60's, there was a growing number of teenage births to unmarried women. The shift from early to late marriage patterns is partly explained by changing economic opportunities, the doubling of unemployment between the '60s and '70s, and the viability of early marriage. Higher education also began to be seen as the vital ticket to the labour market.

Black families in particular experienced the most dramatic change, with marriage among teenage blacks virtually disappearing over the last two decades. However, rather than being viewed as a black trend, this is now seen as a pace setter for the larger population with the major difference between early child bearing in the past and present, teenage fertility, now occurring outside marriage. With early marriage in any case failing to survive, children of teenage mothers also have a far higher probability of living in single parent families.

The original Baltimore study highlighted the struggle of early parenting both for the mothers and children involved, with the majority of participants seemingly destined to live a life of social and economic disadvantage. This book, however, tries hard (perhaps too hard) to disprove the stereotype of the inevitable poverty cycle, and reliance on welfare, of teenage mother. There is, however, little evidence of the "remarkable and surprising results" of the study in respect of longstanding adaptation to early parenthood, heralded in the inside book cover. Rather, while the stereotype may be exaggerated, the evidence found it not wholly wrong. While still well below their counterparts, many were better off
today in most respects, apart from any substantial change in marital status, than they were a decade ago.

In a similar area, longitudinal studies by David (1986) in a follow up report of the history of children born to women twice denied abortion in Czechoslovakia, and other longitudinal studies done in Sweden and Finland, clearly show the widening differences between these and other children. Here unsupported women faced enormous financial hardship and complex social and emotional problems, with resultant effects on the children concerned. David’s research subsequently led to changes in Czechoslovakian policy towards first term abortions. While this book’s concern is only that of the adolescent mother in later life, both the importance of the prevention of unwanted pregnancy and the advantage of well planned pregnancy and birth are apparent, but are barely addressed at all in this book.

While the majority of teenage mothers do not make out nearly as well as they probably would have if parenting had been postponed, some do break out of the poverty cycle. The book correctly points out the importance of determining what conditions, in the long term, constrain or promote successful adaptation. The study showed that some teen mothers were able to stage a recovery in adulthood - ie return to school after dropping out, find work after welfare dependency, curtail fertility after one or two more births, with the life events at the time of adolescence not the only ones to affect later adjustment. While some may have been “late bloomers”, the most dramatic routes identified in this process were marriage and voluntary sterilisation.

However, from a policy perspective, opportunities for recovery in adulthood are seen as barely having been tapped, with those services offered to disadvantaged mothers already making some profound differences. Ameliorative programmes focusing on education, child care, job training and job opportunities, both for the disadvantaged females and males (to increase the chances of stable marriage), are seen as an important part of a much needed developmental approach. The author notes (p153):

“...The maintenance and augmentation of programmes of adult education, job training and family planning services may be highly cost effective approaches of dealing with half of our sample who become chronic or near chronic welfare dependents”.

Where mothers can begin to overcome the disadvantages of early parenting, the study also showed that the increasing economic independence of the mother will also have a positive effect on children of teenage mothers, regardless of their early welfare status and negative childhood experiences. Change occurs across the life span and results show it is never too late for effective intervention. The authors argue for greater involvement at federal and local level, and the development of a national policy towards teen pregnancy rather than the current piecemeal and often contradictory strategies.

With regard to our own situation, the book has relevance in its exploration of teenage pregnancy, not as a new phenomenon but rather in relation to its changing social context and the way it is publicly viewed. However the concern over school girl pregnancies and “baby dumping” in the current Zimbabwean context, means that identification of different areas for effective intervention are crucial. Here too this book is helpful, with its emphasis on policy formulation in the area of successful adaptation and recovery in the mothers’ later teenage and adult years. Policy makers here would also do well to reconsider the consequences of immediate school expulsion for pregnant school girls, and often the responsible school boy as well. The recognition of the possibilities for change at different stages of life, rather than a predetermined inevitability, is also useful.

Reviewed by Norma Hall, Harare, Zimbabwe.
HIV infection and AIDS are a problem in Zimbabwe and, as such, information is needed on how to tackle this problem. This book sets out to give information on HIV and AIDS, and what action to take, with simple illustrations, and it clearly meets its objectives.

Before detailing the contents of the book a quick overview will reveal that it can be read on three different levels. Firstly, all the detailed, but lucidly written, text can be read. Secondly, in each chapter both quotations and key points are boxed as highlights, thus enabling the reader to skip or re-refer to chapters without having to search the text for important points. Thirdly, the reader can gain important information from the cartoons alone. Each cartoon contains a simple but very relevant message, which helps to clarify some of the common misconceptions about HIV infection and AIDS.

The book is divided into 7 chapters. The first chapter gives background information on the AIDS epidemic, the controversy over its origin and on HIV infection. Although statistics are rapidly changing a good baseline is given and readers can update their information from other sources. Chapters 2 to 5 give information on HIV infection, and the AIDS disease, transmission of the AIDS virus (HIV), avoiding HIV infection and testing for the AIDS virus (HIV). These chapters, which can be read in sequence or individually, give important facts as well as correct misconceptions. This makes it useful for a wide variety of people, not only health workers. Points for group discussion can also be easily selected.

Chapter 6 gives very useful information on counselling, support and self-help, that can be used equally well by the person suffering from AIDS or with non-symptomatic HIV infection, friends, relatives as well as the counsellor or educator. With the rapid spread of the HIV virus and lack of trained counsellors, this chapter will be invaluable to all who read it. The final chapter is devoted to public awareness, attitudes and policy. Although awareness of AIDS is growing amongst the public, attitudes towards sufferers and toward changing behaviour are only changing very slowly. The need for increased awareness cannot be over-emphasised and thus the readers of this book will be in a better position to educate others.

The Appendices with contact addresses, an annotated Bibliography and Glossary of Terms are unusually helpful, and in themselves make the book worthwhile. This book should be widely available to the public in libraries, schools and clinics, as well as to private individuals. It gives good basic information on HIV and AIDS and guidance on solving this growing problem.