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Book Reviews


In Triple Jeopardy the authors focus on the three fold impact of HIV/AIDS on women as carers, as infected persons, and as mothers who may infect their babies. It is a well-researched, thought provoking, balanced, and sensitive publication. It should prove very useful for AIDS service organisations, and for a wide range of community organisations, policy makers and concerned individuals. It is, of course, of particular relevance to women and women's organisations.

The book has seven chapters covering epidemiology, the mechanics of risk, questions of choice, reproductive issues, pediatrics, economics and prevention strategies.

It examines the impact of AIDS on women in diverse settings, from sex workers in Asia and Australia to poor rural women in Africa, to middle class professional women in Africa, Europe and the USA. The authors quote World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that of the eight to ten million people thought to have already contracted HIV, one third are women. WHO estimates that the year 2000 75-80% of HIV infections will have resulted from heterosexual intercourse. This places heterosexual behaviour change at the centre of prevention strategies. However, Triple Jeopardy highlights the enormous difficulties in achieving such change because of fundamental socioeconomic and cultural factors. These are well illustrated throughout the book along with examples of current strategies to promote such behaviour change and supportive attitudes. Some of the most telling examples used are first person accounts which enormously enrich the whole book.

The authors conclude that HIV is not merely a medical issue but raises fundamental issues of equity between the sexes and between regions of the world which are at the heart of the development debate. Without radical change, women, and particularly the most disadvantaged women in the poorest communities around the world, will remain in Triple Jeopardy (pp91-92). Thus the authors strongly advocate improving women's economic and social status to promote effective control of AIDS, and to mobilise support for infected people.

The style is highly readable and engaging, with numerous personal quotes and comments. The text is broken up with information boxes, case studies, and examples of education material, and uses the format of the three earlier Panos books on AIDS. Triple Jeopardy is shorter than the previous books, but maintains a similar high standard of factual content, breadth and readability. While it does stand on its own, it usefully complements the previous publications.

The book is comprehensively researched and tightly referenced, although one limitation is the lack of an index. A detailed index would make it easier to access material on specific issues where, from the contents section alone, coverage is not immediately obvious. An index could usefully cover factual subjects, such as female condoms or prostitution, for
example, as well as geographical references. The book's utility could also be enhanced by more developed examples of strategies for education and change. However it in no way purports to be a 'how to' manual so this may be an unfair criticism. Its aim is to increase information and awareness, and to stimulate discussion and appropriate action based on sound analysis. In these aims it should succeed very well.

Reviewed by Helen Jackson, Lecturer, School of Social Work, Harare.

The word biotechnology is emotive. Recently, I wrote an article arguing that science cannot be separated from emotion, though the temptation is to say 'Stop being emotional and approach the matter in a scientific way'. Scientifically, biotechnology is almost a miracle (Science doesn't believe in miracles!). It is leading science into discoveries and possibilities beyond that which many laypeople could imagine is possible. But this also is the menace. I remember Pat Mooney giving a talk at a Conference in Harare two years ago. He warned that when approaching the issue of biotechnology a basic Law of Technology should not be forgotten. He phrased it as follows: "Any new technology introduced into a society which is not fundamentally just will exacerbate the disparities between rich and poor". [On page 107 there is an interesting printing error, instead of 'so patients can be identified early' it reads 'so patents can be identified early'. Is biotechnology as it is being researched and applied more interested in the patents or the patients?]

While reading Miracle or Menace? Biotechnology and the Third World, both the Development Dialogue 1988 issue "The Laws of Life" and the New Internationalist 1991 issue "Test Tube Coup. Biotech’s Global Takeover" were important to me. I would certainly recommend that all three publications are read to gain a comprehensive picture of the implications of this (terrifying?) new technology. Miracle or Menace is the one to start with, because it has an accessible style, helped by useful informational inserts which give point by point explanations on topics such as Recombinant DNA, plant cells, vaccines, etc.

Miracle or Menace covers the main areas of biotechnology application and controversy, its potential use and abuse in agriculture and food processing, how it can help improve world health, ownership of plant genetic resources (most of which come from South, but are being altered and patented by the North), and the possible unforeseen environmental dangers that could be caused by the release of novel organisms into the environment. But for some reason it makes no mention of the potential use of biotechnology in biological warfare, nor how research in this direction is going fast ahead. Perhaps the subject is too controversial, or the information so classified that it is impossible to report on it satisfactorily.

Another criticism I would make is that the book fails to question the whole premise on which modern science seems to be based, ie treating the symptom rather than looking for the real cause. A good example of this is in agriculture. The real cause of the problem is that agricultural science continues to look for ways of dominating nature, hoping to understand and control its incredible complexity instead of working with it. The proposed directions for biotechnology are a continuation of this trend. Any discussion of its beneficial potential or dangers needs instead to debate this fundamental issue and not presume that
biotechnology should grow out of existing scientific paradigms, and often do not recognise biodiversity as a fundamental prerequisite to sustainable food and energy production.

Robert Walgate, the author, outlines the aims of the book (the ‘dossier’) as:
* to clarify the basic science behind biotechnology
* to tackle controversies over the possible risks and benefits of biotechnology for the poor
* to report stories, actual cases of applications, research programmes and policies.

The first aim is achieved in excellent fashion. The second is covered satisfactorily, but the third, though a number of stories are reported, is inadequate. The Development Dialogue issue “The Laws of Life” achieves this third aim far more comprehensively by giving precise data on what has taken place in research during the last 15 years, and what the trends are in the corporate world where most of the research is being carried out.

What comes out of the three publications mentioned in this review is that biotechnology has potentially far reaching effects for us all. It is, therefore, important that we lay people have some understanding of the implications. Miracle or Menace is a good introduction to this, but does not answer the question posed.

Reviewed by John Wilson, Permaculture Association of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe.

References

The stresses on peasant communities do not all come from the State, and this book offers a fairly comprehensive survey of them.

Peasant farming is described as touching on self-provisioning, full commercial farming and scale of labour, and thus is a complex entity which is not easy to define precisely. The influences and stresses on it are equally complex: ecological, economic and political. These, with less emphasis on the first, are outlined along with the various solutions currently on offer, all of which are found to have their disadvantages. Some will take heart from the conclusion that a worker-peasant alliance could be a viable political-economic strategy in the hands of a longsighted government in control of its economy.

The wealth of material in this book makes it more dense than could be expected from the declared intention of the series, to provide ‘scholarly, but lively and up-to-date’ books. Scholarly and up-to-date it is, and for anyone seeking deeper understanding of the situation and problems of the majority of Africa’s agriculturalists, and of policy-makers in this regard, it will reward the careful reading which it demands.


This book provides a comprehensive analysis of social security policies in 28 industrial countries, and focuses on developments since the Second World War. The author contends that the social and economic consequences of World War II necessitated a reorientation of social security policies. The attention of the readers is drawn to the proclamations of the ‘Four Freedoms’, the Atlantic Charter, the International Labour Organisation, and the Beveridge Report, all of which in one way or another have helped to shape social security policies in industrial countries. The author observes that the concern of many governments after the war was to extend coverage of social security to every citizen, and to ensure that the benefits provided were adequate. The author, however, argues that the economic problems of the 1970s and ‘80s, characterised by high rates of unemployment and inflation, weakened many social security schemes and forced governments to review their social security policies. Such reviews often resulted in the withdrawal of some benefits and the tightening of eligibility conditions.

A comparative analysis is made of the coverage of social security programmes, eligibility criteria, type and adequacy of benefits, and the financing of programmes. Major social security programmes (including old age, longterm invalidity, industrial injury and employer pensions, as well as unemployment compensation, health benefits, family allowances and public assistance) are analysed in detail. Significant attention is also given to the pattern of expenditure on social security. The author observes that there is great variation in social security spending among industrial countries, but in general “countries with the oldest social security programmes have been found to be the largest social security spenders in several studies”. The debate on flatrate benefits versus earnings-related benefits is given sufficient coverage. An interesting note from the author is that, although earnings-related benefits do not serve the interests of the poor, flatrate benefits are not likely to be introduced because of the “strong political support for earnings-related schemes”.

The role of international linkages in shaping social security policies is explored, but the author points out that instruments developed within the parameters of these linkages have not necessarily been implemented. The author discusses linkages which are effected through the ILO, the Council of the European Economic Community, and bilateral agreements, and also provides a useful framework for determining the extent to which social security policies are sensitive to international linkages.

The author assumes that readers are familiar with the concept of social security, and consequently does not provide a detailed conceptualisation of social security. Those readers who are not familiar with the subject may, therefore, find it difficult to follow the analysis. Despite this limitation the book is written with great clarity and has thematic flow. The analysis shows evidence of wide research and the book provides a detailed comparative analysis of social security policies in industrial countries. Policy makers, social science students and academics in both developing and developed countries will find this book a useful addition to their reference material.

Reviewed by E Kaseke, Principal, School of Social Work, Harare.
This publication contains two of Thomas Sankara's speeches on women: The Revolution cannot Triumph without the Emancipation of Women (March 8, 1987), and Women's Role in the Democratic and Popular Revolution (October 2, 1983).

Sankara basically explains the history of women's oppression in terms of the class struggle. He shows how a woman's duties evolved from the division of labour, and relegated her to an inferior position. Because of her love for the family, a woman suffers double oppression, both in the home and outside it.

The speeches are easy to comprehend, full of respect for women, and for their status, what they go through, why they go through it, and most of all, what they stand for. They lead the reader to appreciate the endeavours of governments in different countries who form ministries or departments focusing on the affairs of women.


The Politics of Reconciliation, Zimbabwe's First Decade, Victor De Waal, David Philip, Cape Town, 1990 (146pp, R39.95, ISBN 1 85065 097 7 cased, 1 85065 100 0 pbk).
This highly readable account of Zimbabwe's past combines a broad historical overview with rich personal anecdote to make a sensitive perceptive whole. As a historical document it is selective and patchy but the theme of reconciliation is the broad thread that holds the book together.

The book goes back to the early exploitation of Africa to provide the historical framework for understanding the issue of reconciliation in the first decade of Zimbabwe's independence. The aims and attitudes of the white settlers, the missionaries, the politicians, and of the different sectors of the black population and the liberation movements are brought to life by pertinent anecdote and illustration.

The book is divided into twelve chapters examining issues concerning the colonial period, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia under Bishop Muzorewa, the election period, the churches' role at different stages, moral and cultural issues, and different facets of the post-independence period. The latter provides some critique of the move towards socialism, indicating some of the pitfalls and limitations in achievements so far. There is also a three page chronology highlighting key events from 1888 and the Rudd Concession to the 1990 elections and the lapse of the remaining Lancaster House provisions. References are given, including firsthand interviews, and there is a useful index of names. The author spent six months, in 1988, interviewing a wide cross section of Zimbabwean society for the book, recording a wealth of personal impressions and views.

A particular focus is on the role of the church, and on the moral justifications given for colonialism, the liberation struggle and reconciliation. Calls for the churches to remain neutral in the face of oppression, or to plead for peace in opposition to Smith's aggression, are seen as totally inadequate, if understandable in context. The fundamental linkage between Christianity and the socialist politics of liberation and reconciliation is well argued and illustrated, contrasting with the hollow rhetoric of Christianity used by the colonial regime to justify capitalism and the domination of the people. Indeed, it is argued that such
profound Christian charity and forgiveness as exhibited by the new leaders constitute "a demonstration of human maturity so far rarely equalled in our world" (p133). The pragmatism of reconciliation is also recognised, but this does not detract from how impressive it is that there have been no purges, no war trials, no violent recriminations against the former regime or the whites in general - even the opposing armies were successfully integrated within a year, with few serious hitches.

A telling quotation is given from Maurice Nyagumbo speaking in relation to Van der Byl, previous Minister of Defence and Foreign Affairs: "If I had not forgiven that man he would still be my gaoler". De Waal writes "The moral insight of that reply is due to the solid ground on which Zimbabwe's policy of National Reconciliation is based" (p1). Ironically, the hand of friendship was extended so readily at Independence, in complete contrast to what many whites feared would come, that some have failed even to recognise the magnitude of forgiveness and acceptance, and have continued to feel justified and secure in maintaining racist and separatist attitudes. The economic base has remained intact, and many, it is argued, have seen little need for fundamental attitude change.

The problem of reconciliation between different sectors of the black population, notably the two main political parties, is also touched on. The unrest and repression in Matabeleland in 1982-3, the rise of the Zimbabwe Unity Movement under Tekere, and the uniting of ZANU PF and ZAPU are all briefly explored, although a more critical appraisal of the problems would have been useful.

As noted earlier, this is a very readable book, giving valuable insights into some of the thinking and attitudes behind the known historical facts. Apart from the prominent focus on moral imperatives, it also examines some of the cultural dimensions of conflict and reconciliation. For example, hyperbolic speeches by African leaders are seen as culturally expected by the masses, and are interpreted appropriately as a display of strength or commitment. They are not intended to be taken literally, whereas the white population and white politicians often misread them as insincere or false because they do interpret them in a literal way.

Overall this is a valuable publication, not for the depth nor breadth of its historical coverage, but for its attempt to portray personal attitudes, cultural understanding and the moral base of its subjects. However, the political and economic realities that block a fundamental social transformation are only partially alluded to and this weakens the book, but it remains a refreshing and worthwhile addition to the literature.

Reviewed by Helen Jackson, Lecturer, School of Social Work, Harare, Zimbabwe.


This thought provoking book, which evolved from a narrower research study on how policies have affected agriculture in Africa, is an attempt to grapple with a series of concomitant aspects of what the author calls the 'food crisis' in Africa. It is not an easy book to review or read. In part this is because the author is determined to look at policies and
implications from a refreshingly unblinkered perspective. He does not embrace any particular theoretical framework which would bind the considerable loose ends he unravels together in a coherent fashion. Raikes appears to be disenchanted with the limitations of some of the obvious ways in which he could have organised his material: by writing a manual of policy recommendations which are unrealistic, or by adopting the disciplinary or ideological scaffolding offered by either economics or Marxism.

The book is divided into two parts. After an introductory chapter the author devotes three chapters to setting the scene in Africa, by focusing on the cause and nature of the ‘food gap’ and taking a closer look at the implications of food shortages and famine. The second part of the book investigates the international situation, with chapters on the EEC, the relationship to project aid, food security and agriculture policy. The final chapter is an attempt to treat some of the disparate strands that have emerged from a different perspective.

The author concedes that in hindsight he could have organised his material differently. His discomfort with the arrangement is evident throughout the book, and one occasionally suspects that one is reading a text which has not yet jelled. This notwithstanding, he writes lucidly and simply and the book offers a provoking smorgasbord of perspectives on different aspects of the food problem: distribution, marketing, food production, agricultural policy, peasant agriculture, famine, food shortage, African governments’ different responses to food security and agriculture (examples from Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and other African countries abound), bias towards technological innovation, food aid, the EEC’s Common Agricultural Policy, US and European protectionism, corruption (“Kleptocracy”), and development project design.

Two interesting interrelated themes dominate. Raikes makes much of the first, and the now familiar, argument that the recent approaches to food shortage (in reality caused more by poor distribution systems and a concentration on the wrong kind of macro development projects) have been technical responses that have underrated political and social dimensions. Without flamboyance and jargon Raikes convincingly demonstrates that this multifaceted problem cannot be adequately understood or addressed by submitting it to the filter of an ideological or disciplinary cage, by deliberately forcing us to infer the implicit conclusions for ourselves. The dissatisfaction caused by the lack of forthright ‘recommendations’ is more than made up for by the seriousness of the questions he raises.

Raikes is able to point to an ironic and false congruity of thought from different camps. He resists the temptation to attack any easy targets or to set up straw-horses, but prefers to tease out more complex interrelationships. An important example of this is his rejection of the two incompatible and simplistic ‘explanations’ of the food problems of Africa: those that blame imperialism and the internationalist capitalist system (i.e. the IMF or World Bank), or those that blame high population growth, low productivity and the policies of the African governments themselves. He argues that although these views are diametrically opposed the protagonists of each version agree wholeheartedly that one must modernise agriculture through technologies, inputs and equipment originating from Western or Socialist countries. They share the ‘assumption of the necessarily beneficial and socially neutral impact of “modern agriculture”’. Raikes amply demonstrates the falsity of this assumption.

The second theme that permeates this book is more subtle and has less relevance to those concerned with food shortage or development per se. Raikes’ intellectual honesty and
confidence in the import of his arguments results in his deliberate 'signposting' of the perceived weakness of the tools of his discipline (economics), his ideological inclination (Marxism), his terms of reference for the original study (designed by the EEC), and his organisation of the material. This book thus acquires a significance beyond development and emergency studies, because it would be a useful book to use in refining 'write ups' of social science research. It would help many 'blocked' research students who are engaged in the gruelling business of testing their 'scientific' and 'ideological' hypothesis against their empirical findings.

I recommend this book both to those interested in development and 'food' and to those who might gain from seeing how convincing (and rewarding) an argument can be without a conceptual framework to organise and hammer the points home.

Reviewed by Gerry Salole, Director, Save the Children Federation (USA), Harare, Zimbabwe.

The pedagogy of social development assumes a unique position in the context of social work education, practice, and research (SW-EPR) for two important reasons. First, traditional social work programmes in the United States do not emphasise, much less require, social development as an essential or specialised component of professional education. The list of entries in the Encyclopaedia of Social Work does not include social development (NASW, 1987). Second, SW-EPR's continuing crisis of confidence as a fully fledged profession warrants the exposition of developmental issues beyond its approaches. These premises have special ramifications for social technology that is designed to improve the human condition 'Beyond the Third World' (Mohan and Sharma, 1987).

Estes' Trends in World Social Development: The Social Progress of Nations 1970-1987 is a welcome sequel to his previous study (1984). World trends in this field are suggestive of numerous dimensions that are crucial for understanding social development in a cross-national perspective. The Estes report on the progress of nations is timely and authentic. It is a chilling reminder of the hopeless human condition that people themselves have contributed to. The forces of dehumanisation — ranging from racism, colonialism and neoglobalism to hunger, disease and ignorance — thwart societal development and global welfare. 'Bioglobalism', therefore, should be the ultimate agenda of social development (Mohan, 1988a). Trends in World Social Development lends support to a global paradigm that underscores the oneness of humanity, inequalities notwithstanding.

In The Progress of Nations Estes made a courageous attempt to assess global social progress in a troubled world. The later book "was undertaken for the purpose of better understanding the myriad social, economic, and political factors that sustain social inequality" (p.xvi). A perusal of detailed tabular structures indicates the diversities, complexities and perversities of nations that are preoccupied with games of mutual destruction rather than real life-enhancing endeavours. "Man is recklessly wiping out life on earth" asserts Linden lamenting "The Death of Birth" (1989:32). Social development seeks to promote life-sustaining systems at the expense of destructive projects. Trends in World Social
Development offers a mountain of developmentally significant data relevant to the understanding of the regional and global dimensions of social development. The assessment of national progress is attempted in terms of national trends and world rankings. The methodology of the study is sound and clear. It explains the formulation of the index of social progress (ISP), criteria for country selection and the socioeconomic development groupings of different nations. Of special interest are sectors of social development activity: education, health, women, economic trends, population trends, environmental issues and development, political participation, cultural diversity and welfare efforts. Students and teachers of comparative social welfare will find the analyses of geographic locale and social development, regional grouping and "adequacy of social provision," regional changes in ISP profiles, and regional and subregional analyses of Africa, North America, Latin America, South Asia, East Asia and Europe both interesting and useful. Significant developments since 1984 are appropriately recorded. The Epilogue contains "two extraordinary events", the US-Soviet accord on intermediate nuclear missiles, and the separation of the Chinese Communist Party from the Government of China. While one can understand the importance of the INF treaty between the two superpowers, the author’s subtle admiration of China as "the region’s preeminent military and political power" appears misplaced. It is counterproductive to applaud the wallows of power that culminate in superpower mentality. As "Asia’s superpower" (p.164) China can muffle the aspirations of the emerging AfroAsian countries that constitute the ‘underclass’ of the global community. In contrast, I would argue that two most significant events that would shape the future of social development across nations may be conceptualised as: the demise of Reaganism-Thatcherism and the influence of glasnost. The problems of global welfare, however, remain eclipsed by the paradoxes of the post-Cold War vicissitudes. The North-South conflicts and continuing problems of international relations thwart social development strategies, especially those conducive to developing nations. The recent Gulf Crisis is a case in point. Theoreticians are beginning to romanticise the superpower balance that maintained peace and security during the last four decades (Mearsheimer, 1990).

Social development is a whole and comprehensive process, and is succinctly analysed in the following (Gil, 1981:67):

"Social development involves philosophical, biological, ecological, psychological, social, economic, and political dimensions. In contradistinction to conventional, by now outdated, notions of economic growth and development, the central criteria for evaluating social development is evenly shared, balanced progress of the entire population of a region, or of the globe, towards enhanced collective, segmental, and individual wellbeing".

The pretentiousness of contemporary social work has caused massive disorientation between professional education and the burning issues of our times. A global consciousness is sadly missing in our education. Professional concerns for basic issues like inequality, injustice, poverty, racism, hunger, human rights, and, above all, world peace, are at best symbolic.

The incorporation of social development content in social work curricula would help develop a mindset that is conducive to understanding universal wellbeing. The skeleton of a paradigm is proffered here for constructing a framework that would help strengthen the
basic premise of a developmental thesis: social development, an essential dimension of global welfare, seeks to promote human freedom at the expense of the forces of oppression (Mohan and Sharma, 1985; Mohan, 1985). This conceptualisation involves four dimensions, each consisting of three elements:

1. Conceptual Unification:
   1. *Zielgeists* of global wellbeing and SW-ERP
   2. Redefinition of social problems, welfare state, social work and social welfare
   3. Reconceptualisation of purpose, mission, issues, and methodology.

2. Curriculum Design
   1. Congruence of interventive approaches and societal goals
   2. Incorporation of metavalues in the learning process and entire professional culture
   3. Human diversity, oppression and social criticism as required components of professional foundation.

3. Creative Planning and Global Welfare
   1. Social policy as the art and science of social regeneration
   2. Social development as a means
   3. Social reconstruction as a goal.

4. Social Development for the New World Order
   1. Fallacies of progress
   2. Race beyond races: The “human” race

A text that would systematically highlight and analyse these elements is not yet written. *Trends in World Social Development* will positively serve as the forerunner of studies that will enrich social development as one of the most crucial intellectual activities of the 21st Century.

Reviewed by Brij Mohan, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, USA.

References


Two thirds of the contributions, collected papers presented at Oxford University Refugee Studies Programme in 1986, deal at great length with the theory and practice of decolonisation, with special reference to the Western Saharan case. The part played by the World powers in the Western Saharan conflict is analysed on a regional and global level. Further papers discuss the lives of the refugees, and lessons and prospects for people who are in enforced exile and “dependent on the continued interest of the international community”.

Hodges writes that the “aim of this collection is to cast fresh light on the multiple facets of the Western Saharan conflict”, which, in his view, had “received far less attention than it warranted”. In this respect, the inclusion of an informed Saharawian voice would have been appropriate and relevant. The final contributions analyse the role of the Saharawi woman in war and as a refugee. Perhaps the most informative and insightful writing in this collection.

It should be noted that people cannot be independent when depending upon the goodwill of donors. The Saharawi people have transformed this dependent situation by relying upon a fierce self-reliance, having never been a subjugated people and able to endure the remoteness and inhospitality of their desert homeland.

Hodges, Franck and Joffe draw the reader’s attention to the violations of the principles of decolonisation laid down by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 1514 of 1960. In the forty year history of decolonisation there have been three exceptions to the decolonisation process, Western New Guinea, the Timor colonies, and the Western Sahara, a Spanish colony that the Moroccans occupied against the wishes of the inhabitants. The case of the Saharawi was heard by the International Court of Justice, and in 1975 the UN General Assembly resolution 3458A (XXX) reasserted “the inalienable right of the people of the Spanish Sahara to self-determination”. But they remain in exile, another flagrant example of the arbitrary nature of international principle.

The Moroccan government has consistently violated the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which they ratified in August 1979, and hundreds of Saharawi have vanished. The disappearances are a further exposure of a disregard for law: “little short of terrorism”.

For over a decade 160 000 Saharawi women, men and children have lived in four refugee camps near the Algerian border, fleeing from the Moroccan army who attacked defenseless people with napalm and cluster bombs. The Polisario Front (the armed liberation movement) has been fighting for self-determination since 1975 when the Spanish colonialists agreed to divide the Western Sahara between Morocco and Mauritania, without consulting the Saharawi people.

The media usually portrays refugees as passive and helpless, but the Saharawis have created ordered, stable communities. Environmentally the region is inhospitable barren desert, with extreme temperature changes. Food production is difficult and most of the food is provided by external donors and Algeria. Algeria provides more than 90 percent of the funding because of the paucity of international donors. The UNHCR assists only selected vulnerable refugees (World Refugee Survey, 1986).

The Saharawis have an organised daily life in the camps. Except for the very old, every adult has a role in servicing camp life through participation in neighbourhood committees
for health, education, local production, social affairs and provisions. The administration and organisation is strong and effective. There are fully functioning schools, health care clinics, and nutrition centres. Aid is given directly to the Saharawi people, through their own administration. This is the only way the Saharawis can control the aid they receive for the running of the camps. Before 1975 over 90 percent of Saharawi women were illiterate, but measures were taken to make education accessible to all. Women now manage the training centres, and the creches, hospitals and clinics, do the training, teach and nurse, organise, distribute food and other supplies, and bring up the children. Women’s rights have been protected by progressive reforms. Arranged marriages can no longer take place without agreement, dowries have disappeared, and women work and argue as equals.

The Saharawi have created an organised, caring society with the full dynamic of women positively involved, both in the struggle for liberation and for their own respect and status, alongside the necessity to survive as nationals of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic.

While this publication is a rigorously researched collection of essays which will serve students of the Saharawi conflict well, there is a tendency to use oppressive academic language which may exclude a wider reading public. In the study of refugees, the refugees themselves know what is best for them, and they deserve to be asked and listened to. All who work in the field of refugee relief, aid and development would be wise to take a look at the Saharawi way of doing things.


The rather sweeping title of this book is misleading, implying a major theoretical statement or overview of research in the area. In fact the book reads more like a dissertation, being a report of research undertaken by the authors in an English day centre for at risk children. The title ‘Family Centre’ for the day centre is also misleading, since siblings and fathers or other family members did not attend. Basically it was a day nursery run by highly qualified professional staff with compulsory attendance by mothers at certain times.

The main body of the book details the behavioral observation of eleven children at the centre, in interaction with staff, peers and their own mothers. The account makes valuable reading for anyone considering undertaking research into child abuse, with its emphasis on the importance of direct observation of the child and child-parent communication process, the summary of constraints, and the discussion of the different uses of statistical versus the case study approaches. The lack of a control group is explained, but is nevertheless a weakness. The authors do not discuss the possibility that criterion behaviours might be equally common in controls and there is no way of assessing from the study how much nonabused children might also exhibit watchfulness, hostility, etc.

Another weakness in the book lies in a theoretical discrepancy which might be particularly troublesome in a culture such as ours where some physical chastisement is normative. The authors seem to assume implicitly that any corporal punishment is undesirable, in spite of the fact that they themselves point out that degree of injury has no
correlation with psychological damage in abused children, and that many children may suffer from emotional rather than physical abuse. I am in no way justifying harsh physical treatment of a child, but it could be argued that a smack or hiding may be a psychologically ‘cleaner’ means of control than emotional coercion, especially in young children who might still have a limited understanding of environmental dangers. This is a controversial issue, possibly because the boundaries are not quite as clear as many first world theorists indicate.

How applicable is the book generally to Zimbabwe? The research design and details, as suggested above, could be very usefully applied here. The day centre concept, on the other hand, might need considerable modification. The Family Centre described makes intensive use of professional labour, we simply could not afford such facilities in Zimbabwe. Apart from cost, the authors point out a major disadvantage, even in the English context, that the mothers learn little and are disempowered, handing over the management of their children to the professionals. A much more useful approach would be to work with families to increase and improve their nurturing and disciplining competence. Day centres to give parents a break from parenting, or the use of the extended family for the same purpose, would of course be valuable.

All in all this book is rather dry reading, but useful for those concerned professionally with the problem of child abuse, particularly researchers.

Reviewed by Margaret Henning, Clinical and Training Director, Family Counselling Unit, Harare, Zimbabwe.