

Book Review

Tasneem Ahmed Siddiqui. *Developmental Issues: Innovations and Successes*, Lahore, Fiction House, 1996. pp. 214.

The fifties and the sixties were the years when a suitable development strategy was keenly debated and many good ideas and fresh thoughts were generated both in terms of abstract models and derivations from country experience. The world seems to have grown tired of this subject now. Where have all the ideas gone?

Enthusiasm about finding the magic route to development and economic emancipation of the deprived masses of the Third World seems to have yielded place to cynicism, inertia and an air of resignation. No wonder, the world has gone back to the two hundred years old Adam Smithian philosophy of market mechanism, and unbridled capitalism ----- a "systemless system". The present "back-to-the-market" wave, of course, has been expertly marketed by donor agencies and governments. But the meek way in which the developing countries have accepted it is also the product of frustrations resulting from assorted strategies and programmes implemented in the last few decades. Rural development, basic needs, population planning, import substitution, export-led growth, nationalisation, public sector corporations, agricultural extension, heavy industry ---- the list of half-backed policies is long. These were supposed to have been delivered by bureaucracies which lacked imagination, energy and empathy for the poor. But their appetite for corruption and capacity for inaction and lethargy were enormous.

The inevitable result is economic distortions, agricultural stagnation, massive rural-to-urban migration, slums, crime and social tensions in cities, and poverty and inequity all over the developing world.

The book under review, though modest in size and get-up, is a breather for a gloomy, crisis-ridden Pakistan. It presents innovations and success cases in meeting challenges of such problem areas as urban poverty, education, healthcare, family planning and corruption. It seeks to highlight the role of such social instruments as community participation, urban-rural interaction, people-oriented programme formulation, communication with the masses (through, among other means, theater "as a means for mobilisation and social change").

It stresses the role of NGOs and grassroot groups in carrying out innovative programmes at the micro-level in meeting some of the obstacles

in the path of the betterment of the masses. A strong case is built for assigning an active role for women in development as workers, income earners and entrepreneurs, but not by rejecting the traditional household functions. The book contains case studies of women taking over their new vocations essentially as an extension of their traditional responsibilities.

But the role of government and the bureaucracy is not rejected. In fact, the editor of the book is a senior bureaucrat himself who is well known for his innovative thinking, hard work, integrity, commitment to social causes, and understanding and empathy for the poor. He was able to articulate and design a programme of 'incremental housing for the poor' in Hyderabad while heading the local development authority. He was able to proceed with this idea which was at variance with the conventional 'sites and services' approach governing housing policies at that time (and even now, except for *Khuda Ki Basti*). Tasneem Ahmed Siddiqui is now associated with the development of *katchi abadies* in Sindh. He has contributed an article presenting a perceptive analysis of the phenomenon of urban slums, in addition to another on incremental housing in Hyderabad.

The book has also been enriched by the contribution of three articles by Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan, a man whose field work in rural development and urban renewal has made him a legend in his life time. Khan, director of the world famous Orangi Pilot Project, writes on the capacity of the people of Orangi, especially the women, to solve their own problems by dint of hard work and ability to "blend the past with the present and foreign culture with their traditional life style". He also mentions the case of two small and poor villages with little more by way of resources than their labour and arid lands. With small loans and good advice from OPP, the people of these villages turned themselves into successful entrepreneurs selling fodder, fruit, vegetables and milk to Karachi within a period of three years.

Other contributors include such familiar names as Javed Jabbar, Shahid Kardar, Dr. Anis Dani, Farrukh Nigar Aziz, Ayub Qutab, Ghulam Kibria, Shahid Nadeem and M. Allauddin, known widely as competent professionals in their own right, and also some relatively lesser known people outside the social activist and NGO circles such as Sara Siddiqui, Dr. Asif Aslam Farrukhi, Dr. Badar Siddiqui, Sami Mustafa, Navaid Hussain, Iqbal Jatio, Shamsad Khan Khattak, Najma Siddiqui and Muhammad Fazal Noor.

The write-ups are mercifully short and crisp, though in many places, the reader feels the need for more data. Nevertheless, the message of this

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book is that even in this age of massive corruption, there are people selflessly serving society and, what is more heartening, producing results.

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