

Book Reviews

Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World. By Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 254 pp. £13.99 hb.

The authors of this book are Ashraf Ghani, former Finance Minister of Afghanistan and a candidate for both UN Secretary General and President of the World Bank, and Claire Lockhart, a lawyer working for the World Bank and the UN, who helped to draft the Bonn Agreement that shaped the Afghan government and took the lead in developing the national programmes' approach to Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts. In their introduction, they draw attention to some forty to sixty states, with nearly two million people, that are 'either sliding backward and teetering on the brink of implosion or have already collapsed'. They point to what they call 'the sovereignty gap' between the *de jure* sovereignty for such states enshrined in the UN Charter and their *de facto* capabilities to serve their populations and act as responsible members of the international community. They take the view that the problem of the 'failed state' is at the heart of 'a worldwide systemic crisis that constitutes the most serious challenge to global stability in the new millennium'.

The book claims to have four aims: to serve as a catalyst for a new understanding of the state as a 'dynamic, citizen-oriented mechanism' for achieving economic, social and political order; to emphasise the importance of a soundly functioning state; to engage the international community in state-building; and to suggest 'the contours of a pragmatic agenda of action'. The authors emphasise that the book is not about Afghanistan but that that country formed the backdrop to an understanding of the challenges involved. Nor is it their intention to produce a definitive reference book on state-building but to stimulate a general discussion on the issue. They have an optimistic outlook, based on three reasons: the general world prosperity (the book was written before the current global economic and financial crisis); the rapid expansion of global knowledge and information technology; and the stock of experience gained in transforming states, which they draw from their own work for the World Bank and the UN. The first part of the book provides the context in which failed states have emerged. The second presents a 'multifunctional framework' for understanding the practices of states, and delineates 'core functions' that the authors consider states must perform. The third suggests practical ways of implementing a state-building mechanism.

In many ways, the book complements the work of Paul Collier at Oxford University and of the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington, DC on the world's poorest people, together with the increasing number of writers who have proposed a redirection, new management or the termination of international aid. At its heart is a call for local people and institutions to be given the freedom to manage their own development, free from oppressive governments and outside imposition, and supported by appropriate and well-directed external assistance. Nurturing local leadership and good governance are therefore considered to be vital. More might have been said about the experience of Afghanistan, given the authors' extensive experience in that country. This would currently be particularly useful, given the deep concerns

about leadership, corruption and misuse of aid in the face of increasing loss of life among Afghan and international soldiers in the military operations against the Taliban.

Ghani and Lockhart founded the Institute for State Effectiveness in Washington, DC in 2005 to develop their aims concerning state-building. The Institute provides independent and practical advice to the international community and national leaders in creating effective states in a globalising world and by tackling the root causes of instability through a 'citizen-centred approach' which links citizens, the state and the market (www.effectivestates.org and info@effectivestates.org).

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Development Economics through the Decades: A Critical Look at 30 Years of the World Development Report. By Shahid Yusuf, with Angus Deaton, Kemal Dervis, William Easterly, Takatoshi Ito and Joseph E. Stiglitz. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2009. 218pp. \$26.00 hb.

In the 1990s the World Bank re-branded itself as the Knowledge Bank. The annual *World Development Report* and its companion (but separately published) volume *World Development Indicators* are the best known intellectual outputs of the Bank or, more precisely, its Research Department, headed by the Chief Economist. The earliest *WDRs* were relatively short and offered a conspectus of the world development scene. They very soon evolved into the now familiar form of a 300+ page tome organised around a particular theme, crammed with boxes and technical references fit for a quasi-scholarly publication. The release of the *WDR* is a heavily promoted event, eagerly awaited by the development and academic community. Or is it? (See below).

The heart of this slim volume (which can be read in one sitting) is an impressive essay by Shahid Yusuf, a career World Bank economist. He places the evolution of the *WDR* in the wider context of the progression of development economics since 1945, though this is necessarily brisk and brief, and omits many old favourites. The successive topics trace a pattern picked out in the following themes: the loss of faith in trickle-down, the rise of structural adjustment, redefining the role of the state, focusing on poverty and inequality, getting prices right, discovering the importance of institutions, mapping the green agenda and agriculture, trying to explain growth, and identifying the reasons for poverty.

Yusuf has many insights and telling observations, many in lengthy footnotes. There are critical comments on topics where the Bank might be thought to be *parti pris*, such as the agnosticism on the links between aid and growth, the collapse of the Washington Consensus, the role of the state in industrial policy, scepticism about the value of creating the right investment climate, etc. Looking ahead, he identifies several topics he believes deserve the *WDR* treatment: technology policies, climate change, water, urbanisation, resilience, and political economy. The 2010 *WDR* is on the subject of climate change, which marks a start to this agenda.

The latter part of the book comprises five substantial commentaries from external economists. Angus Deaton, who chaired an external review panel for the Bank's research, is sceptical of the payback from the immense resource input to the *WDR*. He believes its size and density discourage all but the dogged specialist reader, and that the

Executive Summary is actually what gets read. The best remembered *Reports* are reckoned to have been those on population (1984), poverty (the 'dollar a day' standard) (1990) and health (the Disability Adjusted Life Year) (1993). One also remembers those on the environment (1992) and Attacking Poverty (2000/01) for the 'wrong' reasons, namely, the (leaked) internal divisions they provoked.

Kemal Dervis, now head of UNDP, believes there is excessive focus on the nation state in recent *WDRs*. In the current economic climate he is surely right to emphasise the systemic international impacts on key elements of development policy such as labour markets, agriculture, tax, energy, trade and finance. William Easterly, who has become the scourge of the Bank and the aid lobby, does not disappoint. His comment focuses on the methodological weaknesses of much of the research used in the *WDRs*, such as the difficulty of explaining growth fluctuations, fallacies and biases in identifying 'success' and its causal factors, the use of circular reasoning, the problems of separating the ephemeral from the permanent, etc. From Japan, Takatoshi Ito argues that the full relevance of the Asian, and specifically the East Asian, development phenomenon is still not appreciated in *WDRs* or the Bank's research agenda. Asia, he believes, '... presents a difficult case for both those who advocate market solutions and those who are more sympathetic to government interventions'.

Finally, Joseph Stiglitz. Not surprisingly, in view of his very public departure from the Bank, he castigates the influence which parts of the US government sought to exert on the Bank and the content of the *WDRs* produced under his watch as Chief Economist. But he also makes a robust defence of their role in challenging orthodox opinions, as well as US policy, in such areas as intellectual property and access to information, corruption, the links between poverty, inequality and instability, what constitutes 'good' institutions, the importance of social insurance, the value of higher education, the importance of knowledge *about* health, and access to finance. To Stiglitz, the chief value of the *WDR* has been '... when it helped to frame controversial issues, when it pushed the boundaries of thinking, when it opened up new frontiers ... when it sparked a global debate'.

This little book teems with seminal ideas for development students, practitioners and policy-makers. The main impressions left on this reviewer, who has been a practising development economist since the 1960s, are: how little we still know for sure, how much thinking on development derives from ideology and ephemeral fads and fashions, how much of it is cyclical, and how little we can usefully pass on as confident advice to policy-makers.

On page 83 we read a statement attributed to Jeffrey Sachs: '30 *WDRs* and the immense library of research fail to credibly establish that the gains achieved since the mid-1970s are the outcome of a conceptually and empirically deeper understanding of development and not a function of luck or happenstance or geography or leadership'. On p. 52 we read of another researcher who, after running 2 million regressions, confesses that '... we still do not seem to understand why Africa turned out to have such a dismal growth performance' (my humble suggestion would be to read chapter 8 of Tim Harford's *The Undercover Economist* describing his first visit to Cameroon as a World Bank economist). Many would agree with one contributor that, whereas early development thinking was too general and theoretical, current thinking is excessively empirical, and researchers with access to huge data banks and unrivalled computing

power do not readily see the wood for the trees. One gets a weary sense of *déjà vu* with the recent ‘discovery’ of the importance of growth to the relief of poverty, and the importance of infrastructure to growth. Is pro-poor growth really so different from the ‘redistribution with growth’ of the 1970s? Debates about the proactive, developmental state, and the role of the market in East Asian development, are resurfacing.

In the last resort, is the *WDR* and all the research it represents helping the real target readers – the policy-makers in Africa, Asia, Latin America and elsewhere? Yusuf is uncertain: ‘... the *WDRs* are doing a creditable job of deepening knowledge and collecting an immensity of experience, but in doing so there is a risk that they might be rendering policy making more complex. So many more necessary conditions are being identified while the sufficient conditions seem ever more elusive ... *WDRs* might be catering more to the student of development than to ... policy-makers looking for practical guidance and rules of thumb.’ Stiglitz, from his wealth of experience as economic adviser in the Bank, the US government and elsewhere, would not be too concerned: ‘It did not bother me that we might not know the right answer. Indeed, it bothered me more that we sometimes pretended to know more than we did.’ As Socrates may have said, the admission of ignorance is the beginning of knowledge, but where does this leave the *WDR*, and the Knowledge Bank? This stimulating book makes the question apposite.

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Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications. Edited by Gil Loescher, James Milner, Edward Newman and Gary Troeller. Tokyo, New York and Paris: United Nations University Press, 2008. 406 pp. \$38.00 pb.

A review of protracted refugee and displaced persons operations (PROs) (defined as those lasting more than a year) conducted by the World Food Programme in 1989 revealed that they had special characteristics, which set them apart from other emergencies. Solutions to three particular problems had to be found: first, how to provide an assured and continuous supply of food that was not only adequate for good health but also sufficiently varied to avoid monotony, and flexible enough to meet changing needs; second, how to co-ordinate supplies of food with other essential non-food needs; and third, how to cater for the developmental as well as survival needs of the victims in terms of their nutrition, health, education and training, and, where possible, to provide employment and income-earning opportunities. In 1998, an additional category of WFP assistance was introduced, known as Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRROs), after the adoption of a policy framework ‘From Crisis to Recovery’, which focused on the need for more attention and resources to be given to the recovery process following protracted crises. It was estimated that 40% of countries emerging from conflict, 60% of them in Africa, relapsed into conflict. External assistance could play a role in helping countries make the transition from conflict to peace and development, but it was essential to have a coherent strategy that united all the parties engaged in the various aspects of the transition.

To meet these problems, a separate funding arrangement was agreed as a sub-set of WFP’s development resources to which donors were invited to make specific

contributions over and above their normal pledges to the organisation, supplemented by up to £30 million a year from WFP's regular resources. In addition, a memorandum of understanding was signed between WFP and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1985, and later expanded, under which the two organisations agreed to combine their comparative advantages in conducting protracted relief operations. WFP committed to responding to PRROs on a priority basis, resulting in an ever-increasing proportion of its resources being allocated to them. This has played a major part in its transformation from being a major UN development programme to becoming the world's largest humanitarian agency. In 2008, WFP provided assistance to over 59 million people in PRROs. But contributions to WFP are entirely voluntary and rations have had to be cut when funding has fallen short of expectations.

This experience forms the background to this publication, which is the outcome of a United Nations University research project on 'The Politics, Human Rights and Security Implications of Protracted Refugee Situations', funded by the Alchemy Foundation and the UNU. The contributors are academics and practitioners drawn from universities in the US, Canada, the UK, India and South Africa and the UNHCR. The focus is on protracted refugee situations (PRSs) in some of the world's poorest and most unstable regions and most fragile states. In their Introduction, the editors point out that PRSs 'represent a significant challenge to both human rights and security, and that despite the growing significance of the problem, PRSs have yet to feature prominently on the international political agenda or in mainstream security studies'. As a result, humanitarian agencies have been left to cope with caring for these victims, which does not constitute a durable solution. The editors argue that PRSs demand new policy and analytical thinking in the areas of conflict and security, one of their starting points, therefore, being the need for a balance between establishing security ('securitization' (sic)) and human rights. In their opinion, there need not be an inherent tension between recognising and acting upon the security implications of PRSs and their humanitarian protection. But, as their book shows, PRSs raise a range of sensitive conceptual and policy debates, which are not easily resolved, including the right of access and the right to protect, which are currently being debated.

The book is divided into three parts. The first, on 'Themes and Challenges', contains eight contributions including: understanding the problem of PROs; asylum trends in the industrialised countries and their impact on PROs; the need for better diagnosis and prescription; human rights and civil society; progress, challenges and opportunities; the role of UNHCR in PROs; a new UNHCR approach to resolving PROs; and historical lessons for overcoming PROs. The second part consists of case studies on: Palestinian refugees; Somali refugees: protracted exile and shifting security frontiers; Sudanese refugees in Uganda and Kenya; Bhutanese refugees in Nepal; Burmese refugees in South and South-East Asia; and Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan.

The third part, on 'Policy Conclusions and Recommendations', has two contributions. The first proposes a broad political and strategic framework for responding to PRSs, linked to conflict management, peace-building and development activities, through which 'three clusters of actors', in peace and security, development, and humanitarian activities, can co-operate in a series of linked interventions in the short-, medium- and long-term responses to PRSs. To provide an institutional context

to advance this co-operation, the establishment of a UN Peace-building Commission is proposed. The second contribution draws some conclusions and policy implications to resolving PRSs. It argues that the linkages between PRSs, security and peace-building are clear. While the challenges are considerable, the human and security costs of inaction will increase over time, and only 'collective political will, underpinning multilateral approaches' can solve the problems.

This book rightly draws attention to a serious moral, security and human-rights problem, with major peace-keeping and developmental implications, that is being overlooked or avoided by the international community. According to its editors, there are now well over 30 PRSs in the world today, mostly in the poorest and most fragile states. The average duration of these refugee situations has nearly doubled over the past decade. However, the book's examination of the problem is incomplete, and its proposed solution unlikely to solve the problem. It would have been useful to have included representatives of the major UN and other humanitarian organisations apart from the UNHCR in the study, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, WFP and UNICEF, and some of the large NGOs with profound frontline experience with PRSs. The people displaced for many years within their own countries, whose problems are similar to, and in some cases worse than, those of refugees, and whose number is much greater, have not been addressed. These displaced people have no organisation to care for them, as the refugees have in the UNHCR.

The linkages and priorities between saving lives, right of access and security, and the right to protection need to be clearly established. This is proving difficult, given the widening gap between theorists and human rights advocates and the practitioners of humanitarian assistance. The work of the UN specialised agencies in addressing PRSs is inadequately covered. Institutional incoherence among aid agencies adds to the problem. With so many players involved both within and outside the UN system, co-ordination of solutions to the problems of PRSs is proving difficult to obtain. And the addition of another bureaucratic layer, as proposed, will not help. Despite these shortcomings, it is hoped that this publication will stimulate further attempts to address and resolve the issues raised.

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Inclusion and Exclusion in Local Governance: Field Studies from Rural India. Edited by B. S. Baviskar and George Mathew. London: Sage Publications, 2009. 454 pp. £39.99 hb.

Together with an introduction by the editors, this book consists of fourteen case studies of *panchayati raj* institutions (PRIs) from twelve states in India. These studies focus on the political empowerment of hitherto excluded communities and categories, namely, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and women, 'in what sense, and to what extent? And if not, why?' (p. xiv). While addressing this central concern, the main concentration is on the processes of decision-making at the various levels of PRIs. Thus, this book is also a study of the nexus between the *panchayats* and the wider social structure, and their mutual impact on each other.

Interestingly, all the studies have adhered to the same methodological format. The researchers spent four months in the field collecting data based on participant observation. Each study covers three *panchayats* in the same *taluka*/block and the same district, one headed by a member of the SCs or the STs, another by a woman, and the third by a *sarpanch* belonging to the locally dominant castes. One month was spent in each *gram panchayat* and one month devoted to observing the working of block *panchayat samiti* and *zilla parishad*. Thus, significant vignettes are provided into the functioning of the new generation of *panchayats* which came into existence in the wake of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1993.

Two studies each have been devoted to Maharashtra and Karnataka, whereas Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Haryana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Manipur, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat are represented by single studies. As expected, they point out regional variations in the continuing hold of effective power by dominant castes owing to their economic clout. But there is a definite advance in the power of SCs everywhere; empirical evidence corroborates that SCs are on their way to political empowerment, notwithstanding their historical handicaps.

The case of STs is slightly more complex, since the provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment are not automatically applicable to the scheduled areas inhabited by tribals. However, Article 243 M(4)b and the Bhuria Commission Report, and the consequent enactment of the *Panchayat (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act*, have extended the jurisdiction of the PRIs to the scheduled areas of nine states: Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Rajasthan. Nonetheless, India's North-East, which is home to numerically preponderant tribal groups, is outside the purview of the *Panchayati Raj Act*, though they have village councils. In a way, the case study of Manipur is anomalous in the collection. Also, it would be foolhardy to speculate on the empowerment of an entire community on the basis of a few instances where some of their members have managed to become *sarpanch*.

Women as a category enjoy reserved political representation in the PRIs. Upper-caste and educated women have been found to be more effective *panchayat* functionaries. Inevitably, women representatives find *panchayat* work time-consuming and tension-ridden. The fear of scandal and character assassination also hinders their free movement and intermingling with colleagues and officials. Lack of transport facilities in rural areas is another major hurdle. The researchers are optimistic, however, in noting that the slow pace of women's empowerment is bound to lead to their active participation in decision-making in the course of time.

The book documents varied instances of social conflicts as well. The contributors remind us that political empowerment is inherently a conflict-ridden process. Yet it releases tremendous social energy and helps spread the discourse of citizenship to varied social constituencies. After all, social transformation essentially remains a painfully slow process. The editors and contributors of this book deserve our thanks for reiterating this wisdom all over again.

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Women's Land Rights and Privatisation in Eastern Africa. Edited by B. Englert and E. Daley. Eastern Africa Series. Oxford: James Currey; Nairobi: EAAP; Kampala: Fountain, 2008. 192 pp. £19.99 hb.

Working on land rights, whether in the context of the so-called global 'North' or 'South', is notoriously complex and contentious. Some specialists, such as Dr Robin Palmer, who provides the Foreword for this book, are even concerned that, with respect to some non-governmental organisations, we may be in the process of discussing the 'last rites for land rights'. The eight contributions in this book therefore bring critically valuable insights that assist in carefully unpacking issues in East Africa, provoking thought based on both old and new lessons. The fact that nuanced gendered arguments hold central sway in these contributions makes the book all the more important and unique, as 'gender' is a theme increasingly suffering from mainstreaming fatigue and dilution.

Inspired by a workshop held in South Africa in 2003 hosted by the Food and Agricultural Organisation along with Oxfam GB, the volume is part of the Eastern Africa Series of books providing localised empirical research. Country contexts discussed include Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda, while themes address 'dead theories', post-conflict scenarios, customary law, access to natural resources, the impact of HIV and AIDS and steps forward. The arguments are presented fairly formally (many of the contributors are academics or lawyers), with meticulous supporting evidence and references. The reader's prior knowledge of key concepts is not assumed – though a short decadal history of approaches to women and gender in development would have been helpful.

The central strength of this book is its commitment to understanding the difference between policy rhetoric and policy practice, using highly detailed experience and knowledge of particular contexts and cultural norms. This commitment may sometimes ruffle the feathers of established ideology; the unravelling of de Soto's famed and paradigmatic proposition of a direct causal link between the formalisation of property rights and economic productivity, by Nyamu-Musembi (Chapter 1), is extremely important. For instance, the fact that the act of titling often spells insecurity as well as security for claim holders, along with the conclusion that formalisation enhances the individual registration of men and reinforces a gendered pattern of exclusion, is worthy of significant attention from policy-makers.

The attention to context is also revealed in the consistent call to understand and incorporate the knowledge, attitude and cultures of practice in customary law when considering policy implementation. Okuro (Chapter 6), for instance, presents some of the (often risky) strategies adopted by widows and orphans in rural Kenya to retain their land rights in the face of the corruption of local officials, the unscrupulous behaviour of chiefs and inequitable traditions. Of course, the presence of parallel tenure systems and the issue of corruption and gendered vulnerability patterns are not new themes in development or public policy studies, but the evidence in this volume adds weight and clamour to increasing calls that government support should go with, rather than against, the grain of the status quo.

There are, however, two basic weaknesses or omissions in the collection of papers. First, there is a noticeable absence of the work of Naila Kabeer, who has made

significant inroads in gender analysis through the use of a ‘social relations’ approach that also considers the interacting drivers of gender inequalities on different institutional sites such as the household, community, local or national government levels. While Kabeer has specialised more in South Asia than in Africa, and while Bina Agarwal (an advocate of the Social Relations Approach) is referenced, social relations considerations are not systematically addressed in the book. A second gap revolves around the primacy of policy content over policy process. There are indeed a number of sections that detail particular process circumstances – ‘what state law makes possible’ (Adoko and Levine) and ‘the way forward: engendering multiple fora’ (Ansoms and Holvoet) – but the concluding chapter fails to combine lessons on the political economy of the gendered land rights policy process itself. Admittedly, the intentional focus of the book is on the grounded realities of land rights policies rather than more distanced processes, but an additional section on the role of donors, NGOs, research institutes and think-tanks in making sense of what makes change happen, would have made the publication more widely applicable.

These criticisms can be considered trivial, in ultimately comparing the role this book plays in invigorating the land rights agenda and building specific gendered evidence-bases in previously under-researched contexts. The book does not alienate any particular audience, but detailed theoretical or abstract academic discussions are minimal. The detail on policy content and delivery of contextual specificities is, however, unprecedented. The book will therefore provide an invaluable advocacy resource for NGOs and networks looking to consider seriously men and women of all ages in a land rights policy initiative, an activity that will only expand given the rising importance of rural-urban migration and climate change, particularly in East Africa.

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Gender Sensitive Disaster Management: A Toolkit For Practitioners: How To Incorporate Gender Mainstreaming in Disaster Response and Preparedness. By C. Pincha. Mumbai: Earthworm Books for Oxfam America and NANBAN Trust, 2008. 119 pp. Available free online at http://www.gdnonline.org/resources/Pincha_Gender_SensitiveDisasterManagement_Toolkit.pdf

Despite my best efforts to diversify, my book shelves are heavily weighted with descriptive (sometimes analytical) work on women, gender, development and disaster risk reduction. I marvel at the distance gained in under two decades of concerted work in this area and struggle to keep up. I wish, too, for a bookshelf just as weighty on implementation, doing the hard work of ‘translation’ – sometimes simply moving people from one language or one disciplinary argot to another, but more importantly from knowledge to action. How do we get there? This is the puzzle that takes us from the ‘toolkit’ to the tool users. Who is building what, how and in whose interests?

Readers will not be naïve about the limitations of checklists, training and toolkits. But, despite the politics of gender mainstreaming, important steps towards implementation are apparent. The Hyogo Platform for Action developed by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) clearly identifies gender as a cross-cutting principle to which government signatories are to be held accountable.

Insufficient by itself, this baseline commitment is promising. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) through its UN partners developed a comprehensive, sector-by-sector guide for humanitarian relief, including a companion guide on gender-based violence. Other practical frameworks for a more gender-responsive approach to crises are now readily available, building on the foundational work of Oxfam in gender mainstreaming. Happily, a new and striking addition is now at hand that focuses specifically on gender and disaster, developed with support from Oxfam by Chennai-based gender and disaster consultant, Chaman Pincha, following the Indian Ocean tsunami. Three qualities make this an exceptional new resource.

First, the toolkit has an accessible feel, using strong visuals and ample case material to bring the larger points to life. This is not a 'how to' book or collection of checklists, but a user-friendly tool inviting dialogue. Users move gradually through the nuts and bolts of gender analysis to an appreciation of the need for it in disaster work. The 'engendering tools' section includes facilitator notes and clearly explains small group awareness-raising activities. Importantly, the 'tool users' are also led to understand how gender analysis in disasters can and must lead to a critical evaluation of larger structures and systems.

Secondly, the manual is based on original data from extensive field studies, summarised in a companion publication *Indian Ocean Tsunami Through the Gender Lens: Insights from Tamil Nadu, India*. This critical evaluation of gender work in disaster response was conducted with the participation of 11 NGOs from Kanniyakumari, Cuddalore, and Nagapattinum districts. The visiting researchers also conducted over 150 focus groups with affected populations. It was thus possible to examine the intended missions and actual activities of lead agencies through the eyes of those most affected. This strategy yielded important findings about innovations and barriers to mainstreaming gender, and added texture and depth that give the toolkit a fresh and persuasive feel.

Third, woven throughout these new resources is a radical take on 'gender'. The notion that gender mainstreaming naturally relates particularly to women is effectively challenged. Gender issues arising for men as well as women are highlighted in the NGO case studies and training manual, and could easily have been among the graphics included in the storybook. Ample first-person statements as well as photographs convey the vital message that gender training in disaster work is everyone's work. These are critical 'lessons learned' about men and disaster in the context of the tsunami. The unique focus of the researchers on those of the 'third gender' or *aravanis*, as they are known in this part of India, also stretches boundaries. The field study provided ample evidence of the pre-event social exclusion of *aravanis* and the way these patterns disadvantaged and endangered them in the tsunami. We are very far indeed from incorporating these home truths in civil society, government, humanitarian organisations and academia.

Pincha's strong and consistent voice binds these resources together, substantially moving our community of practice from study and research to training and practice and on to the political stage where mainstream practice and policy must be challenged.

Bonus! The manual is accompanied by a small spiral notebook highlighting key points in ten laminated pages, ideal for use in the field. Light on text and richly illustrated, the storybook can be used by knowledgeable members of the community or

by trained facilitators. Posters, too, are available for downloading at no cost. These excellent illustrations will be appreciated in many venues and should adorn the walls of governmental disaster management offices everywhere. The manual includes a glossary of Tamil terms and the Indian Ocean tsunami is clearly the frame. This may – but should not – limit its use, as the historical context of the manual and the overall message are distinct.

These materials are all the more precious for being free, bucking the trend of privatisation and profit-making in disaster planning and emergency response. The values of the author, her research team, her funders and members of the collective *Breaking Boundaries* are the ‘value added’ in this work, and we are indebted to them all for this.

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Making Sense of Global Health Governance: A Policy Perspective. Edited by Kent Buse, Wolfgang Hein and Nick Drager. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 352 pp. \$90.00 hb.

This book – the outcome of a two-year collaboration between two multidisciplinary groups of European authors, in association with the WHO – reviews current understanding and practice of global health governance. It traces the shifts that have taken place since the 1960s from international interactions on health matters to a global approach in which a growing multiplicity of non-state actors have become involved in new mechanisms for collective problem-solving. The contributors note, however, that action at national and local levels remains a powerful determinant of health outcomes and warn against undue focus on global architecture and strategy to the detriment of local process and agency.

The governance processes developed to address recent important global health challenges are reviewed. These include access to medicines, in particular antiviral therapy for HIV/AIDS, and the efforts to safeguard public health concerns in the Doha round of international trade negotiations. The roles of specific actors are analysed, notably the commercial sector, civil-society organisations and philanthropic foundations. By their very nature they have particular vested interests but are nonetheless key actors in achieving global objectives. In all cases there is need for better accountability and operating frameworks for co-operation, at both global and regional levels. Global Health Partnerships such as the Global Fund are cited as examples of good practice that can bring together all legitimate parties and mobilise and manage innovative financing mechanisms. But the authors acknowledge that practice so far has often been controversial, and that more public-private partnering is needed and better incentives for global co-operation.

A chapter is dedicated to the controversial subject of the impact of vertical, disease-specific global governance processes, notably against HIV/AIDS, on the capacities of health systems in low-income countries to tackle broader disease priorities. Global mechanisms that help low-income countries tackle difficulties in co-ordinating and absorbing large volumes of funding from many sources are undoubtedly important. At the same time, the authors note a tendency by focused global networks to create an

'influential global policy elite' that may be at odds with countries' needs to address the full range of their specific public health priorities.

Increasingly these include the rising problem of chronic, non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cancers and heart disease. A successful example of global tackling of a major chronic disease determinant is described, namely, the WHO's International Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Much remains to be done. The final chapter argues that today's non-polar world requires that international institutions, particularly the WHO, strengthen their roles as platforms and brokers so as to ensure better interaction between the myriad interested parties. This, in turn, challenges nation-states to improve their capacities for health diplomacy.

The book is extremely timely. In recent years there has been an increasing appreciation of the importance of health in human development and poverty reduction. At the same time, the fear of pandemics, particularly HIV/AIDS and influenza, has placed health firmly on the global security agenda. In this context the effective management of the global interactions, processes and interests that impact upon population health is more important than ever. It can no longer be left in the hands of health sector technocrats.

The book draws effectively on the insights of its multidisciplinary authors and their extensive research of the relevant literature. It will be of interest to scholars and practitioners of global governance in general, and not only to those interested in health. It identifies a set of challenges that constitute an agenda for future action and research. This reviewer would have liked to see greater attention to two issues that are only briefly mentioned in the text. The first is a definition of the term 'global health'. Without interpretation, the words alone are an unsatisfactory basis for dialogue and setting common objectives. The second is the recognition that policy and action in individual countries are important determinants of the health of populations. Global actors need to be sensitive to realities on the ground. Future global health governance will require a strong and credible information capacity to ensure a balanced perspective.

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