

Paul Gready and Jonathan Ensor, Reinventing Development? Translating Rights Based Approaches from Theory into Practice, Zed Books, London/New York, 2005, pp. 315. ISBN: 1 84277 649 5.

Discourse on development has been around for some time and strides into realizing development have been disappointing. The object of the book as the title suggests is well placed and attracts any reader, researcher or practitioner in development field. It's well set as it provides a number of case studies from developing world of Africa, Asia, and Latin America as well as developed world. In essence the book attempt to redefine development within the framework of Rights Based Approaches to development.

The introduction by the editors of the book sets the tone of the text. They gave the historical dimension to human rights discourse and examined its nexus to development. Of importance the authors managed to provide highlights and critique of these rights based approaches.

Part A of the book addresses issues in Africa. The first contributor, Urban Jonsson, investigates the coming in of human rights-based approach to programming. He begun by offering the definition of human rights and how it is linked to development and moved to analyzing the methods for applying Human Rights-Based Approaches (HRBA) using Uganda and Mozambique as the main examples. The author analyzed the practical issues to the adoption of HRBA.

The second chapter is by four authors explored the experience of Oxfam International in rights based programming. They began by explaining the background to Oxfam and its main objectives. In essence they explained Oxfam's activities in relation raising

awareness of rights providing relevant case studies of where they were involved. They highlighted challenges that were experienced and concluded that; 'rights-based development programs and campaigns are an important complement to the longer-established activities of organizations dedicated to the protection of human rights'. p.76.

The third chapter by Andrew Jones dwelt on Rwanda as a case study analyzing Care international's experience with human rights approach given Rwanda's history of having 'virtually no tradition of popular participation in public life'.p.80. He gave background to Care International and its role in relief and development assistance. The author analyzed Care's adoption of rights-based approaches and how it transformed itself into becoming rights based organizations. They explained the challenges that were faced and how they were circumvented. At most he highlighted 'while the theory has been clear for some time now in Care Rwanda and the wider development world, appropriate and workable ways for putting the theory into practice have been much more harder to pinpoint'.p.96.

Chapter four by Pamela Ashanut Okille assesses the impact of rights-based training using Uganda as the case study. She located the centrality of human rights' role in development and ending poverty. The author captured perceptions and understanding of civil society organizations respondents to human rights issues and how they were being conceptualized by these organizations. She went on to expose the challenges to applying rights-based approaches. In the final she noted, 'the challenge (to applying rights based approaches) is to provide support to sustain ... momentum, and work on providing other people with opportunity to experience and benefit from the training'. p.107.

Ghalib Galant and Michelle Parlevliet, in Chapter five analyzed how the use of rights based approach held in solving conflict. Using six analytical propositions and three case studies they managed to analyze the theory and practice of the relationship between human rights and conflict management. The authors explored in detail the dimensions of rights in addressing conflict.

Part Two deals with case studies from Latin America, Asia and Europe. The sixth chapter by Marta Antunes and Jorge O. Romano dwelt on infant's human rights as it pertains to

food and sustainable nutrition in Brazil's urban environment. They gave the status of Brazil's urban poverty and the specific conditions of the city of Sao Joao de Meriti. The authors analyzed the role of Action Aid Brazil in fighting poverty detailing the experiences, challenges and achievements. They concluded by providing lessons learnt with the approach and noting that 'food is no longer seen as a favor bestowed by political elites or as a private issue of individual survival, but as a right'. p.142.

In Chapter seven, using India as a case study Supriya Akerkar analyzed the relationship between rights, development and democracy. The author gave the state of human rights in India and moved on to analyze the experience of Action Aid India with the rights based approach using specific cases of Kutch district in Gujarat and Bolangir district in Orissa. In essence the experience shows that 'Action Aid's work with the poor and their organizations shows an emergence of new kinds of social net work or relationships that enable poor people to secure their rights'. p.154.

Joachim Theis and Claire O'Kane in Chapter eight analyzed children's rights approaches as adopted by children's rights organizations based in Nepal. The authors traced the evolution of the centrality of children as participants and actors in development. They dwelt on child clubs that were established by support of a number of Non Governmental Organization distinguishing areas of focus of these clubs. An extensive analysis of the achievements and impact of child clubs on development processes and actors was provided. Challenges of the clubs were also alluded to and threats to their survival were also exposed. In the final the authors noted, 'The child clubs in Nepal show how children's participation can be a force of transformation in communities and in organizations'. p.166.

From the legal and justice point of view Amparo Tomas in Chapter nine analyzed how supporting justice system have been used to benefit the poor within the framework of rights based approaches. From the stand point that 'development programs on law and justice have traditionally had a weak knowledge base' p.171, the author justifies how legal and justice reform assist the poor and how development agencies have come to be

involved in assisting the expansion of formal and informal justice system in helping the poor. The author exposed the main gaps, challenges and obstacles to transforming justice systems to enable development of the poor. In the final the author noted that ‘the existence of structural obstacles to development cooperation seem to leave little opportunity for reinvention of current development discourse’. p.182.

Chapter ten by Neil Jarman analyzed issues of human rights and peace building using Northern Ireland. A back ground to the conflict was provided and major issues of abuse of human rights were exposed. The author analyzed how various actors attempted to solve the problems bedeviling the Northern Ireland communities. For Northern Ireland as the authors rightly put it, ‘ Human rights are now established as one element of the peace-building process, but one that will need to be nurtured, supported, encouraged, monitored and sustained over the coming years...’p.196.

Part three of the book addresses the current challenges to rights based approaches. Paul O’Brien in chapter eleven analyzed issues of aid politicization and rights based response to it using Afghanistan as the case study. The author analyzed the concept of aid politicization and how the humanitarian agencies have responded given their questioned integrity. An analysis of how humanitarian agencies find themselves in such situation was given. Issues of both civil and military aid were identified, as the main contributors to aid politicization and USA was given as a major example where she gives aid for political mileage. Using CARE as a case study the author analyzed how right based responses were undertaken. The author provided a detailed analysis of lessons learnt with rights based approaches. He recommended ‘that it may indeed be time for NGOs to accept fully the frightening burden and inspiring possibility of becoming true rights based organizations’. p.225.

Chapter twelve by Hash Mander justified the centrality of rights based approaches to development. For him ‘rights bring the root causes of impoverishment to the center of development and a force a focus on the needs of the poorest’.p.233. He made a critique of past approaches to development based on service delivery there by justifying the essence

of rights based approaches. The chapter conceptualized rights based approach, highlighted the major features and main actors involved. The author rounded by analyzing the role of the state in enforcing people's rights within the framework of good governance. Of essence he noted, 'it is important to emphasize that we are not arguing for a reduced, but rather an altered role of the state, one that recognizes and supports people's real freedoms, and is supportive of people's own action'. p.251.

The last chapter analyzed the nexus between rights and culture and how it affects rights based approaches. He informs that ' If a rights based approach is adopted by an agency, they must consider whether they are imposing a version of the good life that resonates with their own (often Western, liberal) principles rather than with the social norms that define the interest of the recipients...'p.255-256. The author justified how rights ought to be grounded in local context.

The conclusion by Olivia Ball presents the major issues that were raised in the text. She highlighted gray areas that still require some examination and illumination beyond this text as far as rights based approaches are concerned.

I find the book quite informative as it offers insights into the theory and practice of development and is a must read copy for those in development work practitioners, researchers, academics and students.

Reviewed by:

Percyslage Chigora

Midlands State University