

## ***Shorter Notices\****

**Swapna Mukhopadhyay, and M. Ratna Sudarshan (eds).** *Tracking Gender Equity under Economic Reforms; Continuity and Change in South Asia*. New Delhi: Kali for Women and International Development Research Centre, 2003. 388 pages. Hardbound. Indian Rs 400.00

This book is based on research supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada, for an inter-country comparison between Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. It is a condensation of coordinated household surveys carried out in the households of women workers in Export Processing Zones and Export-oriented Units in the above-mentioned countries. As widely understood, unlike “sex”, which is biological, “gender” is a socially-constructed category. “Gender” becomes an unobservable variable in the language of econometrics due to the large range of its manifestations. The research here has adopted an innovative approach of using some of the overt manifestations of “gender” to capture the impact of changes in economic policy initiatives on gender relations in society and at the workplace. More emphasis, however, is laid on gender relations in society as these are played out mainly in the arena of the household and the community, and to a lesser extent in the workplace.

The research concludes that the process of economic reforms has been instrumental in changing the external environment of households affected by them in one manner or another, and may have done it at a pace faster than anything seen before. This, in turn, has brought about changes in the manner in which different members of the households perceive and adjust to the new situations. The authors (Mridul Eapen, Swarna Jayaweera, R. L. Kapur, Praveena Kodoth, Swapna Mukhopadhyay, N. Sangeeta, Manju Senapaty, Rehana Siddiqui, Shahnaz Hamid, Rizwana Siddiqui, Naeem Akhter, Anushree Sinha, Shobna Sonpar, Ratna M. Sudarshan, and Salma Chaudhuri Zohir), however, feel that with more and more women being exposed to the external world, through schooling and the labour market, it is possible that subtle changes are indeed taking place in the patriarchal society. A new era of gender equality may be ushered in through the questioning of traditional gender equations by women themselves.

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**Nora Dudwick, Elizabeth Gomart, Alexandre Marc, and Kathleen Keuhnast (eds).** *When Things Fall Apart*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2003. 445 pages. Paperback. Price not indicated.

“When Things Fall Apart” is a collection of qualitative studies of poverty in the former Soviet Union. It is the documentation of the experiences of men, women, and children in eight of the former Soviet Union states (Armenia, Georgia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan). The book provides an insight into the impact on poverty and changes in lifestyles following the collapse of the Soviet Union. It departs from the normal perspective of seeing poverty in terms of pure statistics, and gives a human face to poverty by looking at qualitative aspects like attitude and perceptions. The studies have been carried out based on open-ended interviews conducted over a span of five years (1993-1998). These demonstrate how poverty in this region differs from poverty elsewhere in the world, and also examine poverty, gender, and ethnicity. The authors point out that during the early years following the Soviet collapse, people throughout the former Soviet territory reacted to impoverishment in strikingly similar ways because of shared material conditions, practices, and ways of interpreting the social world. Over time, however, the differences in the ways in which these countries have approached the task of nation- and state-building, in legacies of resources and assets, and in social and cultural traditions, have called forth increasingly differentiated individual and household responses to poverty. By the late 1990s, serious poverty, along with coping mechanisms initially thought to be temporary or deviant, had become a normal aspect of life. It is a good read on the psychological as well as the social and economic impact of poverty, unlike other studies that demonstrate the impact of poverty in pure numbers.

**John B. Kidd and Frank-Jurgen Richter (eds).** *Corruption and Governance in Asia*. Houndmills, England/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 256 pages. Hardbound. UK£ 50.00.

The editors of this volume are focused on corporate governance in Asia, and have compiled papers recognising the most pressing contemporary issues facing business management in terms of ‘business ethics’. It is a highly readable volume sending out a clear message that no change or improvement in business management is possible without recognising good governance as a prerequisite to keep up with global business trends. It serves well those who are eager to gain a deeper understanding of the current level of development of governance in Asian countries and what can be done to improve it.

This book is divided into thirteen chapters. Each of the chapters in the book looks at different aspects of business management in some of the leading Asian countries in the realm of international business. The current trend of globalisation

requires all nations to meet a certain set of prerequisites to ensure healthy participation in international business. Business, whether in Asia or elsewhere, is not just about making sound investment decisions, taking and managing risks, and coping with economic uncertainties. In today's world, business is also about social responsibility, putting all actions under public scrutiny, and responding to the concerns of those among whom the entities conduct business. The authors of the book suggest emergent models of governance that might be acceptable in today's dynamic business world. The book covers most of the central issues of governance that are being faced by governments and corporations in Asia. The authors conclude that where good governance is firmly in place, there will be fewer problems because of corruption.

**Susan Laws, Caroline Harper, and Rachel Marcusel.** *Research for Development*. New Delhi: Vistaar Publication, 2003. 475 pages. Paperback. Indian Rs 450.00.

The handbook highlights the role of research in development as a tool for not only academic but also development planning purposes; for instance designing programmes with a research-oriented lens in order to make them more robust, effective, and sustainable. Divided into two parts, a conceptual and a practical one, the conceptual part provides a framework for helping development workers understand the benefit of using research, resolving a problem through research, and adopting different research approaches. The second part provides more hands-on guidelines on conducting research. The volume facilitates development practitioners to develop methodologies to hear people's views accurately, adopt an analytical approach, and develop a reflective process on how our actions determine the responses we get.