

HALL, Anthony & MIDGLEY, James. *Social Policy for Development*. Published by SAGE 2004.

Reviewed by Antoinette Lombard

Social Policy for Development expands on previous works and provides a fresh, innovative look at social policy and its legitimate sphere and role in the development process in the context of the South where a more comprehensive, holistic and cross-sector livelihoods analysis is more appropriate to address long-term issues of poverty and social deprivation. In line with this argument/premise, the book adopts a broader definition of social policy, namely the livelihoods approach which incorporates economic, social, environmental and other dimensions that directly or indirectly affect people's well-being in both foreseen and unforeseen ways. Within this broader definition, the goals of social policy emerge as multi-faceted, including poverty alleviation, social protection, social inclusion and the promotion of human rights. The authors indicate that a livelihoods approach acknowledges the poor people's strengths and assets for pro-active participation in the development process and they bring together three core principles, namely a focus on people, a holistic approach to analysis and policy prescription, and an emphasis on macro-micro links.

Within a broader sustainable livelihoods framework, the book answers the question as to how social policy strategies can be improved to better address critical development problems in the South. These developmental problems are contextualised within the local, national and global dimensions of social policy which contributes to a rich debate and comparison of developing and industrialised countries in terms of the most appropriate interventions to address specific needs of diverse groups.

The authors' appeal to search for new and more appropriate strategies is not made in a vacuum since their proposed strategies are based not on a rejection of all past practices, but rather on an initiative to identify best practices and combine them with new experiences and analysis in appropriate application suitable for diverse and changing circumstances. This approach captures the interest of the reader and creates a learning environment which makes the reader want to question current practice in relation to new focuses, opportunities and challenges of addressing poverty. The authors take the reader through a journey of understanding the context and involvement of the discussed fields by introducing and explaining the main conceptual debates, the most recent policy discussions, including current trends, conclusions and the provision of applied examples to illustrate the latest developments in the field. By providing the historical evolution and context of the discussed field, the authors help the reader understand current trends and answer possible future questions on the relevance of social policy strategies for development. The book is divided into 9 chapters. Chapter 1 provides the overall framework for the book, whilst Chapters 2–9 discuss separate fields and, within a sustainable livelihoods framework, highlight the new opportunities available for the most appropriate social policy strategies for development in the following dimensions of social policy:

- Poverty
- Rural development
- Urban development
- Education

- Health
- Social work
- Social welfare (social security) and
- International development and cooperation.

The framework as outlined in Chapter 1 provides a holistic framework for social policy that includes livelihoods and rights-based approaches for the alleviation of poverty and satisfaction of basic needs. The authors present 'holistic' social policy as incorporating elements of the statist, the enterprise and the populist paradigms which are the three major normative approaches of social policy. Within this holistic framework, the dimensions of social policy are discussed according to the role of the main actors, namely the State (central, decentralized), civil society (NGOs, communities, social movements), private business sector (domestic, supra-national, transnational) and international development institutions (multilateral, bilateral, UN agencies and regional bodies).

The central message in the book, which is consistent with its vision that the main objective of planned development is concerned with people's well being, is that the best hope of raising standards of living and eradicating poverty lies in an approach that combines a commitment to economic development with the introduction of social policies that specifically and directly address the poverty problem. The authors argue that productive strategies are the most appropriate to address the complex and multi-dimensional nature of poverty in the world today. The livelihood policy approach acknowledges the importance not only of productive processes but also of reproduction (domestic work and child care), consumption and social relations in ensuring sustainable livelihoods. The authors explain that strengthening social capital and empowering communities to be able to mobilize in defence of their own interests is as important as building human capital based on the productive capacities of individuals.

Chapter 7, which examines the role of social work and human services in the context of development, is very helpful in understanding the relevance and important role that social services can play in addressing poverty and promoting national development of countries in the South. Convincing arguments are made which, in my view, should finally remove any doubt amongst social workers that they simply have to adopt and implement productive strategies to address the development problems in the South. This chapter leaves the reader with an eagerness to take up the challenge posed by the authors for social work and human services to integrate remedial, prevention and developmental functions within a holistic, community-based model to address poverty. This challenge can be linked to the debate presented in Chapter 8 on how social security forms an integral part of wider debates about social policy and development.

Throughout the book, the authors emphasise that poverty eradication requires the resources of the State, market and the community and therefore development becomes a multi-institutional and cross-sector challenge in which State, international development agencies and donors, NGOs, the private sector and grassroots communities must combine forces to design and implement local-specific solutions to particular problems. The whole of Chapter 9 is dedicated to the important role of one of these main actors, namely international development institutions. The authors indicate the significant influence of international development and coordination on the development of social policies in the South.

Social Policy for Development is a much needed textbook in that it brings clarity to the link between social policy and development in an unambiguous way. The well presented theoretical debates and applied examples from research and practice experiences leave the reader with the experience of having read more than one book since a wealth of knowledge and applied examples

are consolidated in this one book. In particular, the extensive glossary of currently used concepts in readings and practice is very helpful in capturing the key elements of the book. The conceptual debates are presented in such a way that they create opportunities for critical and analytical thinking, not only for students, but also for practitioners seeking a deeper understanding of the complex and multi-dimensional nature of poverty and how the social policy agenda should be widened in order to address it effectively. The rationale for social policy shifts from welfare services and safety nets to sustainable livelihoods is not only convincing in terms of sustainable development, but it provides the framework for students and practitioners to take up the challenge to find more appropriate and innovative social policy strategies for development.

As intended by the authors, the book succeeds in creating theoretical and practical debate on social policy in the context of the South and at the same time it can serve as a reference point for academics in related disciplines as well as policy-makers and practitioners in government, international and non-governmental organizations. I can affirm the value of this book for all involved, having used it this year for teaching the master's programme in social development and policy and as a reference for research on productive strategies to alleviate poverty.

Two chapters of the book were authored respectively by Jo Beall and Mrigesh Bhatia and Elias Mossialos. Anthony Hall and James Midgley are pioneers in the fields covered by this book. This is evident in the approach, layout and the wealth of knowledge and experience captured in the book. It is a book that speaks with authority on the topic of social policy and development and should add value to anyone who studies and work in this field.

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