

ODA is highly contextual, as manifested by the uniqueness of each case study, all researchers highlight the necessity for a constructive forum where NGOs can share their experiences and learn from others. This book by ODA Watch responds to this call. The realistic and empirically founded recommendations and insights provide the NGOs the prescience and, more important, motivation for their future endeavors.—
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Coralie Bryant and Christina Kappaz. 2005. *Reducing Poverty, Building Peace*. Connecticut: Kumarian Press. 214 pp.

Reducing Poverty, Building Peace is mainly a collection of the many techniques and strategies recently being used by organizations worldwide in combating poverty. It begins with addressing poverty as a multidimensional problem inevitably connected to other parts of the social world, such as the economy and crime. Perceiving poverty in this perspective, it then informs the reader of the strategies and solutions that have proven themselves effective in past attempts to curb poverty. Given the very many examples presented in combating poverty, this book does not focus for too long on any particular problem or technique. It instead gleans over many examples, emphasizing breadth over depth. Not that this does it any harm, however; it contextualizes its data within main points the authors contend are essentially antipoverty.

The initial part of the book gives an overview of poverty as multidimensional and deeply connected to many other issues in society. Basically, poverty is global for two reasons: it is a feature common to all nations, and connected globally due to advances in science and technology. Hence, they conclude that poverty should be viewed equally and seriously across different countries, whether progressive or poverty-stricken.

Another important topic in the book is the idea of social exclusion. This is defined as the exclusion of the poverty-stricken from access to necessary assets (e.g., health and financial security) due to their status. Contrasted to social exclusion are some of the more common perspectives on poverty, such as that of income-based analysis wherein the delusion of a “rising economic tide” will sink the level of poverty

due to increase in earnings. What is important, first and foremost, is a comprehensive look at poverty as multidimensional—not simply poverty as an end in itself but as a dilemma extending from and blending with many aspects and sectors of society. This encourages more constructive and creative approaches toward battling poverty.

Unfortunately, the book's explanation on why poverty is globally interconnected is found wanting, as it attempts to elaborate from simplistic instances of global connections (i.e., the downfall of the US stock market has repercussions worldwide). Constructing a sturdier framework to discuss the interconnectedness of poverty in a global setting could have helped solidify their explanation as to why poverty is a global problem.

The bulk of the book, which is found in the second to sixth chapters, consists of the proposed methods of the authors in combating poverty. It includes theories, strategies, and descriptions of projects based on the multidimensional view of poverty. This section is well-researched and contains several clear examples from numerous credible sources. While these chapters trace a path through the structures involved in fighting poverty—institutions, policies, and implementation, to name a few—what is really worth focusing on are the recurring themes.

Planning within context is one of the major themes. This means that the people and organizations working in social and economic programs have to define what they are working on from the perspective of who they are working for. The book considers the Washington Consensus, with its one-solution-for-all economic policies, as having worsened rather than improved most economies. This is a prime example of what happens when a fixed set of policies is prescribed for differentiated economic landscapes. Moreover, opening up economies does not mean they will prosper; Korea and Japan used systemic barriers and tariffs to strengthen their development.

At a more “micro” level, participatory development is essential. Participatory development refers to the involvement of local people in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects in their respective communities. This is contrasted with “normal” community development in which external experts fully take charge of the community. In participatory development, members of the community decide for themselves what they want, what is to be done, and how it is assessed with the cooperative assistance of experts in the field. This encourages a constructive, creative synergy among stakeholders,

beneficiaries, and poverty workers, potentially fostering more effective projects than those that would have relied on a single external team of experts to make all of the decisions for a community.

Moreover, limiting poverty assistance to developing countries is, as implied by the authors, not quite a good idea. “Developed” countries, such as the major seven industrial powers, are also plagued with poverty within their own territories. The authors believe that international institutions like the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) tend to focus on poverty within poor countries when in fact poverty is existent in every country; it is *global*. This is in line with the conception that poverty is multidimensional and borderless, and thus intertwined with issues and social forces across the globe.

In the last chapter of the book, three final issues are examined by the authors. These include: 1) the conflict between military and economic planning, 2) development assistance, and 3) international systems of governance.

Regarding the conflict between military and economic planning, the authors contend that there is an imbalance in spending. Somewhat illogically, defense spending generally takes priority over development spending regardless of the situations of the countries. Defense expenditures reduce economic growth. Expenditures in defense are also prioritized in times of war, instead of spending constructively to remedy the problems causing the war. A final implication of defense spending is that it could lead to and support the formation of war economies.

Development assistance refers to the actual aid provided for by other countries in the fight against poverty. Besides financial aid, this also includes international and economic policies. The Washington D.C.-based Center for Global Development has created an index for this, and the results show that it seems to be lacking in general. The major seven industrial powers as a whole contribute less than other smaller countries. Unrelated to these measures but still disconcerting is the fact that the US, being the largest economy in the world, spends less than one-tenth of 1 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) for international development. Though the book views these contributions as somewhat lacking and therefore problematic, the matter is actually subjective, as there is no accurate level of contribution that is demanded in international assistance. Still, these situations give us a reality check on the issue.

The authors emphasize the lack of cohesion, finances, and political will that hinder international organizations from functioning effectively. Agreement among international organizations on how to resolve poverty is difficult because of their number. Problem solving is obstructed by lack of funds. Implementation is encumbered by politicking and bureaucracy. Unilateralism and hegemony, especially those brought about by the US, take the upper hand in the playing field. These are the concerns in the international setting, and much political will and collective action are necessary to resolve them. In sum, the book is appropriate to a wide range of readers, most especially those belonging to the realms of the social sciences and social work, due to its wealth of information and explanations concerning poverty. Those looking for a single, intensive, and straight-to-the-point solution to poverty and its related problems might be disappointed, since this book, as pointed out earlier, does not focus too long on any particular issue but gleans over many examples. Nevertheless, it is still quite useful and a well-written book in its own right.—MIGUEL AFABLE, VOLUNTEER-INTERN, THIRD WORLD STUDIES CENTER, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES-DILIMAN.

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Annelies Heijmans, Nicola Simmonds, and Hans van de Veen, eds. 2004. *Searching for Peace in Asia Pacific: An Overview of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers. 848 pp.

Searching for Peace in Asia Pacific is a testament to the relentless effort to secure peace in the Asia Pacific. The book redefines the concept of security, reemphasizes the role of both state and nonstate actors in peacebuilding, and rewrites the accounts of wars and conflicts to capture the lived experiences of the affected societies. The book is a product of the efforts of various peoples who are experts in their fields and are directly involved in making peace work within a diverse region comprised of the Northeast, Southeast and Pacific Asia. By linking theory and praxis of conflict prevention, management, and resolution, it aims to provide essential information about different actors in conflict prevention and transformation in the Asia Pacific region, provide insights into various approaches to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and provide space for the voices of local civil-society