

Book Reviews

Water Management in India, P.C. Bansil, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2004. Pp. 558. Rs. 950.00.

The book under review rings one more warning bell on the inadequate water resources management in India. In recent years, several books have been published on various related themes of water, ranging from resource aspects to institutional aspects. But, this book is a result of the author's, being a Rotarian, many years of toying with the idea of putting water resources management as a thrust area for Rotary International as part of its activities during the "International Year of Freshwater-2003"; Its International President Mr. Jonathan Majiyagbe, in his foreword to the book, says the purpose of this book is to educate the public to manage the "elixir of life". The author's long years of experience in international organisations in several countries has influenced his efforts to write on a wide canvas with macro-level issues laced with micro-level underpinnings.

The 17 chapters of the book is presented in four parts: Part 1 set the stage with global and Indian scenario, along with water situation in Delhi, as a special case; but the question remains why only Delhi, while many other cities, like Chennai, suffer from acute shortage of drinking water. The causes and problems are described in Part 2, with a good number of illustrations based on secondary sources. This part of the book covers irrigation scenario, land degradation, besides water supply and its quality problems in both urban and rural areas. In Part 3, the author comes up with a plethora of solutions, again based on wide ranging secondary sources, including published case studies and features in the newspapers and magazines. But many of those references are difficult to find in this book, e.g., water quality reports by the Department of Mines and Geology, or by the Pollution Control Board, though there are several 'Jal Nirmal' agencies at the state level to provide rural drinking water supplies. However, the suggested solutions range from resource management to rainwater harvesting, interlinking rivers and new approaches to irrigation. But then, new approaches lack the punch and depth of what many research studies and non-government organisations (NGOs) have widely debated and published in recent years. Part 4 draws conclusions on water policy in India and comes up with wide ranging 43 recommendations. A bonus for the readers is a critical review of the National Water Policy 2002 in Chapter 16. The author has meticulously carried out a comparative analysis of National Water Policy of 1987 and of 2002 in a tabular format spreading into 11 pages (pp. 509-519). In conclusion, he says, "There are very little differences in the two policies including their language. In fact, most of the provisions of the earlier policy have been repeated verbatim" (p. 508).

This desk-based study brings in various experiences based on published sources to deal with planning and management and a substantial section on rainwater harvesting. The author has also taken care of developing a separate section interlinking efforts and its various issues and innovative approaches to irrigation of the country. As part of the conclusions, the author provides elaborate discussion on the water policy in India covering both Water Policy of 1997 and 2002 and has lined up several recommendations for the policy makers. A book like this largely based on secondary sources, both published and unpublished, also comes up with certain inadequacies like inadequate review of recent literature for example, groundwater markets, community based rehabilitation, rejuvenation of traditional water bodies and field realities of conjunctive water use.

Another lacuna is lack of capturing the emerging trends like Narmada Pipelines System for distribution of centralised drinking water supplies in Gujarat and roof-water harvesting in several villages across the country and its benefits. Also missing is 'Dying Wisdom'. Unfortunately, the book does not capture the irrigation financing trends (p. 335) that emerged over the last 15 years in several states in India where market borrowings resulted in funding of irrigation projects. Similarly inadequacy may also be observed in the case of emerging trends in participatory irrigation management process in several states dominated by the big bank approach followed by Andhra Pradesh.

However, the book is a very good source for several ready references. For example, tips for water conservation (pp. 111-113), groundwater quality implications. The book is also rich in putting together enormous data for several decades on irrigation, drinking water, urbanisation and so on. A good review of recent literature, would have enriched the present version. But, there are very few books on such a wide canvas for policy makers, researchers, and students and for readers in water management. This book is a good attempt to fill this void.

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Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals, United Nations, New York, 2005. Pp. 329.

Recently, there seems to have been a revival of interest, among international institutions, in poverty and food security. The recent ODI Report on "Fighting Poverty in Africa: Are PRSPs Making a Difference" and FAO Report on "The State of Food Security in the World 2004: Monitoring Progress Towards the World Food Summit and Millennium Development Goals" are instances in point. The UN Report on "Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to achieve the Millennium Development Goals" belongs to this genre.

It may be recalled that at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, “the largest gathering of world leaders in history adopted the UN Millennium Declaration, committing their nations to a new global partnership to reduce poverty, improve health and promote peace, human rights, gender equality, and environmental sustainability” (p. 3). The Millennium Development Goals, an off-shoot of the above Declaration, are the world’s time bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions - income, poverty, hunger, disease, lack of shelter - while promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability. The Goals set some 18 targets which include: (i) Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day; (ii) Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger; (iii) Ensure that, by 2015, children every where, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling; (iv) Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate; (v) Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, and (vi) In co-operation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth.

The present Report asserts that these Goals “drive a new era in international development. They are the first, international goals to recognise at the highest political level, that poverty in the poorest countries can be dramatically reduced only if developing countries put well designed and well implemented plans in place to reduce poverty - and only if rich countries match their effort with substantial increases in support. No well intended but impoverished country is to be left under “business as usual”, solely to its own resources” (p. 4).

The UN Millennium Project is an independent advisory body commissioned by the UN to evolve best strategies for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Project was directed by Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs and the bulk of the analytical work was carried out by 10 thematic task forces comprising more than 250 experts from around the world, including scientists, development economists and practitioners. Dr. M.S. Swaminathan was one of the Task Force Coordinators. The Report of 329 pages which is the result of these massive efforts, is divided into three Parts: While Part 1 explains why MDGs are important, Part 2 spells out country-level processes to achieve MDGs. Part 3 makes recommendations for the international system to support the country-level processes outlined in Part 2.

The reviewer feels that the most valuable contribution of the Report is the insight it provides into the development process through cross-country experiences. “While progress in China and India is to be lauded as a global-scale triumph, it would be a mistake to declare “victory” in cutting extreme poverty on the basis of progress mainly in two countries, while dozens of other countries with hundreds of millions of the World’s poorest people are not meeting the Goals” (p. 3). The Report is particularly ecstatic about China. “China’s economic performance in the last two decades has been nothing short of spectacular” (p. 159). Real per capita income

growth averaged 8.2 per cent per year. The incidence of rural poverty declined from 30 per cent in 1990 to 11 per cent in 2002. China would therefore be able to reach the MDGs. The Report commends India's economic performance over the past decade as "strong" (p. 163). Per capita income growth was around 4 per cent per year. The percentage of people below the poverty line dropped from 37.5 per cent in 1990 to 26 per cent in 2000. But India faces several challenges in meeting other Goals: high rates of under nutrition, large number of children out of school, poor health indicators, wide disparities in social and economic indicators, particularly for women and disadvantaged sections of the population. India's most pressing challenge, according to the Report, is a massive scaling up of public investments in the rural areas of the worst performing States (p. 165). An MDG-based investment strategy for India is therefore recommended. For the Indian researcher this is the all too familiar ground and there is little "value addition" to the existing knowledge on the subject.

Take the countries of East Asia. As a Group, it has moved closer to achieving the Goals but progress has been uneven within the region. The Report illustrates the disparities by contrasting the performance of Thailand and Cambodia. Thailand, a high performer, was able to reduce poverty from 27.2 per cent of the population in 1990 to 9.8 per cent in 2002. The proportion of underweight children dropped from 18.6 per cent to 8.5 per cent. There was significant progress in achieving other Goals also. By contrast, despite commitment to MDGs, Cambodia is off track for most Goals (p. 161). It would have been helpful if the Report were to throw some light on the factors underlying the contrasting performances.

Turning to Africa, the Report poses the question: Why has progress toward the MDGs proved so difficult in much of Sub-Saharan Africa? The standard diagnosis is that the continent is suffering from a governance crisis. But the Report argues that this is a superficial explanation. "Our explanation is that tropical Africa, even in well governed parts, is stuck in a poverty trap - too poor to achieve robust and high levels of economic growth, and in many places simply too poor to grow at all. More policy or governance reform, by itself, is not sufficient to break out of this trap. Africa's extreme poverty leads to low national savings rates, which in turn lead to low or negative economic growth rates" (p. 148). The average saving rate in tropical Sub-Saharan Africa is about 11 per cent, as compared to 20 per cent in Latin America or 18 per cent on South Asia or 34 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific. The combination of low domestic saving rate and high population growth has led to stagnation in Africa. This brief discussion gives some flavour of the useful insights into the development process one might gain by browsing through the Report.

On a broader canvass, two aspects of the likely impact that this Report may make on development economics and policy in general may be highlighted. First, the market theology of the IMF and the World Bank had greatly influenced public policy in many developing countries in the 1990s. The mindless pursuit of market-led growth strategies had diluted the development content of public policy. Indian policy

makers of the 1990s perhaps were no exception. A correction of this euphoria of market-led growth was overdue. This Report provides the correction in a subtle manner. Recommendation I of the Report stipulates: "Developing country governments should adopt development strategies bold enough to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets for 2015. We term them MDG-based poverty reduction strategies. To meet the 2015 deadline, we recommend that all countries have these strategies in place by 2006. Where poverty reduction Strategy Papers (PRPs) already exist, these should be aligned with MDGs" (page XX). By making MDGs as the focal point of public policy, the Report has succeeded in bringing on the top of the development agenda issues like reduction of poverty, elimination of hunger, health and education of the rural poor. Direct attack on poverty had become anathema to policy makers during the market theology phase, but it has now again become respectable. This is indeed a remarkable achievement. Interestingly enough, in the case of India, the National Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the present UPA Government clearly reflects this changed perception of development.

The second aspect relates to what the Report calls "global partnership for an inter-connected world", between rich and poor nations. Recommendation 7 stipulates: "High-income countries should increase official development assistance (ODA) from 0.25 per cent of donor GNP in 2003 to around 0.44 per cent in 2006 and 0.54 in 2015 to support the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in low-income countries with improved ODA quality (including aid that is harmonised, predictable and largely in the form of grant-based budget support)" (page XXII). How far is this target achievable? It has become necessary to pose this question because past record in this area is disappointing. Those with long memory would recall that the World Bank had appointed a Commission under the Chairmanship of Lester Pearson, a former Prime Minister of Canada, to make an indepth of study of aid for development and make recommendations for facilitating larger flow of aid. The Commission's Report submitted in 1969, entitled "Partners in Development" was acclaimed, at that point of time, as "one of the most important documents of the twentieth century" (see the article "Unequal Partners in Development", N.A. Mujumdar, Economic and Political Weekly, November 22, 1969). The Commission had recommended that the commitment of official development assistance (ODA) should "reach 0.70 per cent of GNP by 1975 or shortly thereafter, but in no case later than 1980." This target must be compared with the average flow of 0.39 per cent in 1968. Alas, are we treading in 2005 the same ground as in 1969? Or, are the circumstances in 2005 any different? The present Report advances one additional factor "Many world leaders have stressed the fact that the fight for global security - to stop war, internal violence, terror and other ills of profound instability - requires success in the battle against poverty as well" (p. 10). The modern breed of terrorism is not necessarily poverty-born. Moreover, this is tantamount to assuming that the rich donor countries would prefer tackling the factors like poverty which have the

potential to sow terrorism, to spending more on arms to suppress terrorism. The reviewer for one, is not sure whether this is a realistic assumption. Instead, the rich donor countries should be inspired by the concept of “shared growth” which characterised the growth process, at the national level, in the Asian Tiger countries. Applied at the international level, this concept could inspire a more meaningful partnership between rich donor countries and the poor countries. One can only hope that the Sachs Report recommendations will not meet the same fate as those of the Pearson Commission.

Mumbai.

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Managing Water Scarcity: Experiences and Prospects, Edited by A. Vaidyanathan and H.M. Oudshoorn, Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternatives in Development and Manohar Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2004. Pp. 434. Rs. 875.00.

Scarcity and conflict over water resource is a vital issue in many parts of the world. The Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternatives in Development (IDPAD) took the initiative in organising the seminar “Managing Water Scarcity: Experiences and Prospects” in Amersfoort in 1997 to discuss the sources and nature of water scarcity and conflicts in specific cases under diverse situations in India, Europe and the U.S.A. The book under review is the outcome of this seminar in which experts from different professional backgrounds and knowledgeable about the issues involved in managing water scarcity participated and contributed papers from different perspectives. The 16 papers in this edited volume have been divided into four groups, besides an introductory chapter by the editors. The introductory chapter highlights the nature of issues involved, commonalities and differences across diverse situations, and different approaches to coping with scarcity and resolving conflicts. The chapter also underscores the importance of coherent, multi-pronged action in technological, legal, institutional and economic fronts within inter-related framework. The chapter further provides a connective summary of all the parts and spells out issues for future research and development in the area of integration planning for a sustainable use of water resources.

The papers, as mentioned earlier, have been organised in four groups, with each group centered around a theme of integrated planning for a sustainable use of water resources. The first group, consisting of seven papers, deals with the nature and causes of water scarcity and conflict in selected systems across India and the responses of different stakeholders. Chapters 1, 2 and 5 focus on over-exploitation, extensive pollution of water sources, and the resultant conflicts between different segments and between different sectors in three river basins –one in Gujarat and two in Tamil Nadu. Chapter 4 deals with over-exploitation of groundwater in Haryana state and explore strategies to minimise it. Chapter 6 highlights the complex geological, technical and managerial problems of water resources development in an

international river basin using an example of river Kosi and describes the experience in implementing a strategy to control extensive flooding by river Kosi during the monsoon and to extend irrigation in the fertile plains of Bihar. The problems of water shortage, depleting groundwater levels and deteriorating water quality faced by the city of Delhi are discussed in Chapter 3. This chapter also outlines a strategy for increased water recharge and conservation. Chapter 7 provides a critical review, supported by real world example, of the drawbacks in the legal framework governing water management in India, the nature of institutional arrangements governing water allocation in irrigation systems, and weakness of enforcement. All the seven papers in the first group provide adequate information of how various concerned interests have/or have not responded to the emerging problems, how effective they have been, and what could be done in future to better cope with them.

The second group of papers discusses non-governmental, community based initiatives to overcome water shortages due to droughts and promote equitable sharing of water and public action to prevent and mitigate the effects of pollution. The emergence of grassroots initiatives to augment water supplies through local mobilisation, developing cost effective technologies for harvesting rainfall, and making more efficient use of water as well as its equitable distribution in a water scarce region of Maharashtra are discussed in Chapter 8. A wide spread and apparently successful community-based movement/experience for rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharge in a chronic water scarcity region of Gujarat is discussed in Chapter 9. A critical review of the role of governments, non-governmental organisations, the effected communities, and the courts in dealing with industrial pollution related problem in different parts of the country is provided in Chapter 10. This chapter highlights using several examples the indifference and ineffectiveness of the government, difficulties in getting effective judicial redress and the key role of public action to tackle with these problems. At the international level, the activities of NGO (International Water Tribunal - IWT) are discussed in Chapter 11. The IWT seeks to provide an informal public forum in which specific water-related complaints and issues can be subjected to professional legal scrutiny on the basis of evidence. While it generates pressure for a fair resolution in formal forums through judicial procedures, its outcomes have no sanction.

The third group of papers deals with the working of laws, regulations and institutions in managing water and resolving water conflicts in the international context mainly in Europe. Chapter 12 describes the growing awareness of the necessity for integrated water management and the increasing complexity of public policy making in relation to water. This chapter also reviews the recent and ongoing effects in the U.S.A. and the Netherlands to develop better methods of analysis and institutional arrangements for integrated basin planning. In Chapter 13 successful informal strategies adopted by the Rotterdam Port Authority to deal with adverse effects of upstream pollution in the Rhine basin on its operations is described. Complementing this experience in chapter 14 an account of the establishment of a

formal organisation, based on a formal agreement negotiated by the governments of the riparian states, for integrated planning of water resource exploitation and use in the entire Rhine basin is provided.

Two papers in group 4 cover the issues related to women participation in water management particularly in domestic water use and irrigation. A general discussion about the role of women in water management and their rights over water is provided in Chapters 15 and 16.

Though the publication of this book comes six years after the seminar, the issues and conclusions spelt out in the different chapters of this volume are still contemporary and need further research. The contributors to this volume deserve appreciation for the comprehensive coverage of the issues of water scarcity and conflict within a transdisciplinary framework and setting a new trend in integrated water management research. The book will be of great interest to academicians, researchers, policy makers and administrators.

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