

## *Shorter Notices*

**World Development Report. *Agriculture for Development.*** Washington, DC: The World Bank. 2008. 386 pages.

As three out of every four people in developing countries dwell in rural areas today, agriculture continues to hold prime importance in the development and poverty reduction context. This 30th issue of the World Development Report (WDR) is divided into three parts and eleven chapters. The first part addresses the question of what agriculture can do for development while the second part shifts its focus towards the instruments that can be used to spur development through agriculture. Finally, the third section provides the policy recommendations for governments and other stakeholders on how the 'agriculture for development' agenda can be implemented in research and practice.

The report focuses on two major regional challenges that require immediate attention. First in Sub-Saharan Africa, agricultural productivity growth is vital for generating overall economic growth. However in order to stimulate growth, small holder and subsistence farmers will need to adopt productivity enhancing practices which the report has discussed in detail. Second, in Asia the report identifies the management of urban-rural income disparities as the most pressing challenge since "Asia's fast growing economies remain home to over 600 million rural people living in extreme poverty". In order to address this issue, the report proposes a mix of policies that can create high value agricultural jobs in rural areas, decentralise non farming economic activities to rural areas, and assist local people diversify into non-agricultural jobs. The report also discusses the issue of managing the scarcity of natural resources such as water and land and its relationship to agriculture and suggests ways of reducing agriculture's environmental footprint.

The final section of the report is the pertinent discussion that brings at the fact that the above mentioned challenges can only be met if the required political will is present in the developing countries. The ultimate success will also depend on how well are the national governments able to collaborate with the international community and the local stakeholders. [*Sofia Ahmed*]

**Human Development Report 2007-08. *Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divide World.*** The United Nations Development Programme. Palgrave Macmillan, 399 pages.

This year's Human Development Report (HDR) focuses on the impact of climate change on the world's poor. It notes that failure to timely respond to the impacts of climate change can halt and even reverse the advances taken place so far in poverty reduction, nutrition, health, and education. The report is divided into 4 sections. The first part discusses the factors that make climate change a pressing global challenge. The second and third parts highlight the nature of climate risks and the strategies for their

mitigation while the last part provides the strategies that need to be implemented in order to deal with this extremely pressing issue.

Although climate change is a global threat and no country is immune to climate change, due to limited savings and lack of access to affordable safety nets, it is the poor people in particular and the poorest countries in general that suffer the most from climate change even though they have contributed the least towards this change. The report states that between 2000 and 2004, at least 1 out of every 19 people in the developing world was affected by a climate disaster each year. The report holds fighting climate change synonymous to 'fighting adaptation apartheid' as it is influencing the poor people the most by forcing them to cope with frequent climate shocks when they are already not in a position to manage any additional risks. In this way climate shocks have the potential to trap various generations of people in a cycle of poverty.

The report notes that it is not the lack of financial resources or scientific and technological capacity that is a major threat to the climate change issues, but the missing sense of human solidarity and urgency in recognising it as the most dangerous threat facing our planet. Climate change challenges the entire human race equally and forces us to reconsider the issues of social justice and human rights across the world. In this context, the report dedicates a substantive part on how to generate a strong collective will and action and a global sense of shared social responsibility to face up to climate change.

The HDR states that the window of opportunity to take remedial action against climate change is closing at a very fast pace. It puts forward the challenge for the rich nations to cut their carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050 and invest in clean technology. On the other hand, the report suggests that the challenge for the developing countries will be to 'decarbonise' their economic growth process. [*Sofia Ahmed*]