

Recent Reports

**World Development Report 1995:
Workers in an Integrating World**
The World Bank, Oxford University
Press, Washington D.C., 1995,
251 pages

This reviewer is not an economist – but a trade unionist with an interest in economics. Economists are expected to have very definite opinions, they have the ability to make sense out of every scenario. The trick is to learn how to leave out the elements which interfere with the thought process and muddy the waters. For example, environmental issues are largely economic issues in this Report and those who wish to deal with the environment in the green sense are referred to as potential protectionists. The title of the Report is at odds with many people's views that what we have with the globalisation of trade and investment is a "disintegrating" world as the social fabric of societies is undermined.

This is a difficult book to review. A braver person than I would attempt to disagree with the collective musings of over 80 individual sources for the main chapters, and a consultation process with trade union representatives and meetings with government, multilateral and NGO representatives and a host of other contributors including the expertise of World Bank staff. The Report provides a wealth of statistics of benefit particularly to researchers, practitioners and students.

In general the authors seem to be in favour of everything (except too much public sector spending – a definition of which is unspecified). Economic growth is good for workers. This assertion is contained on the third page and really all points thereafter stem from that assertion and all roads lead to and from that point. "Economic growth delivers higher wages and encourages workers to move to higher paid, high productivity jobs in the formal sector". But the achievement of higher growth which leads to higher wages and enough work for those who want it, and does not simply create a widening gap between those in work as against those who are not, and at the same time maintains or secures a quality of life which can actually be enjoyed beyond the world of work is an equation the solution to which not even this body of thinking can provide. Evidently no economy has succeeded in doing so. Moreover, the poverty problems in the US and unemployment levels in the UK would tend to belie the existence of such an economy and make its achievement on current trends more rather than less remote.

What is true as the Report states is that "the global labour force has grown massively in recent decades. In 1995 there are an estimated 2.5 billion men and women of working age in the world's workforce, almost twice as many as in 1965." Statistics

can be interpreted to mean anything you like but nonetheless it must be of concern that "by our estimate in 1870 the average income per capita of the richest countries was 11 times that of the poorest; that ratio rose to 38 in 1960 and to 52 in 1985".

"Success leads to success" in the economic arena in the view of many governments and their advisors. In this scenario the most important element of any economic policy at government level is to decide and then to keep going, not to be distracted by negative reaction, by for example, the electorate. The militarist nature of the South Korean government during the critical years of that country's development and the compulsory military training for all males are felt by some to have been key ingredients in why that country succeeded in going where many now wish to travel.

When I first came across this particular publication it was during a visit to Manila in the Philippines on route from South Korea. There I read a summary of its contents in the local newspaper. In a sense many of the challenges facing economies as described in the *World Bank Report*, but in addition to these factors, the elusive issue of quality of life, are visible in these two remarkable, and remarkably different Asian countries. The environment in Seoul has been destroyed. There is no pleasantness about the city. Cars clog every street and thick smog envelops the high rise greenless space. When holidays come roads are clogged with thousands vying for space and air outside of Seoul.

Trade unions

Now there is a contradiction to the free market place! Not so says the World Bank. "Denial of workers' rights is not necessary to achieve growth of incomes". However, the reality is rather different. For example, in the Philippines the government's economic strategy centres around making the country a newly-industrialised country by the year 2000. This strategy commonly known as "Philippines 2000", provides for the amendment of labour legislation to legalise contract working, and where contracts last for less than 6 months, preclude trade union representation. The World Bank notes: "for most households, poor and prosperous alike, income from work is the main determinant of their living conditions". This may be self evident but in this revolution everyone has to make hard choices.

Women are treated with great interest and respect in this Report. Statistics are used to good effect showing the gaps between male and female earnings on a worldwide basis along with several country studies detailing examples of extreme inequalities which reflect not only the disadvantaged position of women in areas such as education, but also absolute discrimination. The authors note the additional hours worked by women outside the wage sector, i.e., in the home, a much debated subject in Beijing.

Surprisingly the Report does not deal with the feminisation of the workplace, particularly in the services sector (eg in hotels and retail outlets), seen by some as the salvation for

economies such as the US. The conditions attached to this employment is that it is increasingly seasonal, temporary, contract-based, part-time and low paid. In the short-term such employment can be of great attraction to women with heavy household workloads, but in the longer term the jobs provide little security. The implications for the social security system for each economy in terms of the elderly if this type of work continues to form a major part of their employment growth, are worrisome, as providing for proper pensions/savings for the future is seen as unimportant. While relative wage rates between men and women in the services sector show positive change in favour of women, the very high share of women in the labour pool in this sector leads to a certain degree of ghettoization and the tendency for men to move onto other more highly paid categories of work.

The World Bank is against gender inequalities, injustices such as child labour, ethnic discrimination, as well as excessive public expenditure, unions that are too powerful and represent "interest" groups, unrestricted migration particularly among the low-skilled though generally it is more positively inclined towards migration than are many people in economies where jobs are threatened. Interestingly the Report refers on a number of occasions to the bias against agriculture, a balance which only countries in East Asia have got right. Such bias increases food insecurity and hits hardest on the majority rural poor in many

countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.

So how does the book propose to square some of the circles in economic development? Will there be convergence or divergence? Convergence is the only option in the scenarios provided in the final and perhaps most interesting chapter of the Report which deals with policy choices and prospects for workers. At this point we reach the "whether" section of the Report, i.e. the domestic economy critical factors which lead to "success" such as swift reactions to new market opportunities or attracting capital – or in managing the market dislocations that changing trade patterns bring; government success in putting in place a framework for labour policy that complements informal and rural labour markets, supports an effective system of industrial relations in the formal sector, provides safeguards for the vulnerable and avoids biases that favour relatively well off insiders, and so on.

International integration and financial assistance will follow it seems if the rules of the club are clearly understood and adhered to. Of course religious or political instability is out. In the Middle East and North Africa this is referred to as requiring progress towards regional peace and resolving internal conflicts. More recent events would seem to indicate that many in this region regard this as a worldwide and not a local conflict. All economies face difficulties in the market-led revolution. None can hope to escape even as freer trade opens up frontiers and opportunity.

From the point of view of workers there is, in my view, a greater need than ever for workers to organise on a national and international scale, not simply to deal with the issue of low wages but also to develop an agenda in which they can meet, on a partnership basis, some of the challenges set by government and the marketplace.

Of concern is the fact that most workers do not seem to be aware of the extent of the revolution to which they contribute, the likely impact on their own economies and their own workplace in coming years, unless they have some involvement in the strategic approach being adopted.

The workplace environment in terms of health and safety does receive coverage in this Report. This confirms the view that the unorganised sector is more likely to contain appalling conditions but also that the drive for economic success can place the priority of workers' health and safety very low on the agenda.

It is cautionary to conclude this

review with a section from the Report which states: "Severe shocks to the economy can create opportunities for some workers and have wrenching effects on others. Transformation follows diverse patterns in different countries, but it also involves a marked acceleration in the destruction of unviable jobs and the creation of new ones. That process is almost always accompanied by macro-economic decline requiring a reduction in the demand for labour and a fall in real wages. The net effects are often large drops in labour incomes, rising unemployment and a shift from the formal to the informal sector. Even the best designed reform produces gainers and losers in the short term, with losers particularly concentrated among the unskilled formal sector workers in urban areas. Moving the economy as quickly as possible to the new growth path is key to limiting welfare losses, whereas giving up half way hits its poorer workers hardest." Workers be aware!

Janet Hughes

Human Development Report 1995

United Nations Development Programme, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press
230 pages

This year's *Human Development Report* from the UNDP deals with gender disparities in development. Its standpoint is that "human development, if not engendered, is endangered", and from there goes on to review global progress in reducing gender disparities in the past few decades. It presents two new measures for ranking countries by their performance in gender equality – the gender-related development index (GDI) and the gender empowerment measure (GEM). It also offers some strategies for equalising gender opportunities in the years ahead.

As with previous UNDP work in this area, much of the interest of the present Report lies in its treatment of conceptual and technical questions – how one defines development, how one converts that definition into measurements and, with reference to the theme of this Report, how one adjusts those measurements to take account of the gender dimension. As before, the UNDP posits three basic constituents of development – health, knowledge and material living standards – and uses crude indices to quantify each (life expectancy at birth in the case of health, adult literacy and a combined measure of primary, secondary and tertiary material living standards). These measures together are used to produce the HDI (human development index), which is the cornerstone of the UNDP's analysis

of development progress around the globe. The HDI has not yet achieved anything like either the technical sophistication or the degree of international acceptance long accorded to more traditional measures of development such as GNP or GDP. However, it has helped to ensure that the limitations of the latter measures are more widely recognised and that the indications of human progress they give are read with some of the scepticism they deserve.

The first of the new gender-related measures introduced in this Report, the GDI, measures the same items as the HDI but imposes a penalty on countries for gender inequality. As the Report says, "the GDI is simply the HDI discounted, or adjusted downwards, for gender inequality". As might be expected, such adjustment is by no means straightforward. It has to cope, for example, with the problem of absolute versus relative achievement for women. Should country A, where women are equal to men at a 50 per cent literacy rate, rank higher or lower in gender equality terms than country B, where women are unequal to men but have a higher literacy rate (e.g. a 53 per cent literacy rate for women and a 57 per cent literacy rate for men)? Furthermore, what constitutes equality as far as life expectancy is concerned? The UNDP adopts the view that women by nature have the potential to live five years longer than men, so that gender equality on this measure is achieved only when that five year advantage is present.

The second new measure introduced by the Report, the gender empowerment measure (GEM) focuses on participation and control in economic, professional and political life. Again, given data limitations, the dimensions which comprise this index are few (three, in fact) and crude. The first is control over economic resources, which is measured as women's per capita earned income. This measure is similar to the income measure used in the GDI. The second dimension refers to economic power and decision-making opportunities, which are measured by reference to women's and men's percentage shares of administrative, managerial, professional and technical positions. The third dimension is political participation and decision-making power, which are measured by women's and men's shares of parliamentary seats.

Taking all these measures together, the UNDP is in some ways strongly upbeat about development progress over the last 30 years. The share of the world's population living at the high level on the HDI (above 0.8) has doubled since 1960 and the share living at the lowest level (below 0.2) has fallen from 73 per cent in 1960 to 31 per cent in 1992. This can be regarded as an extraordinary achievement. Gender equality has also progressed greatly, particularly in regard to women's health and

education. But there is a depressing side to the story as well, in that the absolute number of people living in very poor circumstances is still huge. For women, especially in the developing world, progress in economic and political opportunities has been very slow, various forms of legal and social discrimination are still widespread and sexual violence shows little sign of abating.

It can be quite a game to track the movement of individual countries across the rankings which the UNDP presents (GDP per capita, HDI, GDI and GEM). Ireland, for example, ranks 30th on GDP per capita, jumps up to 19th on the HDI, falls back to 30th on the GDI (largely, it would seem, because of Irish women's low rate of participation in paid employment) and moves up to 24th on the GEM. More strikingly, a number of developed countries such as France, Japan, Spain and Ireland rank below China, Costa Rica and Cuba on the GEM but rank above them on all the other indices. There are many other intriguing instances of disjuncture between the index rankings. Given that the constituent measures from which these indices are made up are also presented in some detail, the Report amounts to an invaluable source both on development as a whole and on gender development in particular.

Tony Fabey

Beyond the Vienna Impasse

“During the course of this very conference, one thousand, six hundred human beings will be killed and wounded. Therefore, I wish to state again that we must eliminate landmines once and for all. We must ban their use. We must ban their production. We must destroy those that are stockpiled.

*– Boutros Boutros-Ghali,
opening message*

The UN conference to review the Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW) ended on 13 October 1995 having failed to reach agreement on a revised protocol on anti-personnel mines.

While increasing public attention has been brought to bear on the landmine crisis and some governments have responded to the humanitarian nightmare, it is still the military perspective that dominates discussion about the future of the weapon. Recognising that non-governmental organisations that form the International Campaign to Ban Landmines went to Vienna for the review conference on the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) with little expectation of significant change to the treaty.

In the final days of the conference, it was quite clear that even minimal changes

that had seemed close to consensus as a result of the Geneva expert sessions of 1994 and early 1995 were being negotiated away. The landmines campaign pushed government delegations to either formulate a strong treaty and then let countries which could not accept it simply not sign it or walk out of the review conference. It was the position of the Campaign that those countries which were blocking changes which might alleviate civilian suffering should be isolated and clearly stigmatised by their refusal to sign a stronger landmines protocol. While governments still argue for the need for consensus to move the world forward, several countries proposed to President Molander a suspension of proceedings so that countries could “reconsider their positions”.

The Landmines Campaign – along with many other agencies, organisations and individuals – believes that, by their nature, landmines are indiscriminate weapons and, as such already are illegal. In what might be viewed as a small concession to this view, the world community called for the “eventual elimination” of antipersonnel landmines in a United Nations resolution in 1994.

The Vienna experience has clearly demonstrated that for

most countries the real emphasis is on "eventual" rather than on "elimination". One delegation at the review conference called the eventual elimination of landmines a "goal without a timeframe". Another noted that no timeframe should be assigned to the elimination of landmines, but as an interim step, stocks of conventional mines should be replaced by self-destruct mines.

The Landmines Campaign does not accept a "high-tech solution" to the landmine crisis. Self-destruct mines – however long their life – are as indiscriminate as conventional mines. *They still deny access to land and make no distinction between a child or a soldier's foot.* Also, pushing for self-destruct mines as the answer does not recognise that in many of the countries now contaminated with tens of thousands – and in too many cases millions – of landmines, such mines would not have been used. The types of conflicts fought throughout the developing world required conventional mines that would last for years and deprive the population of the use of their land. Landmines have been targeted directly against civilians and in such logic, a short-lived mine will not do the job.

The "safe" mine option offered by the West was met

with stiff resistance at the review conference by countries such as China, India and Pakistan. In the view of the Landmines Campaign, the position of the Western countries that self-destruct mines will solve the problem also underscores the fact that they do not have any intention of eliminating the weapon: how can you advocate the use of self-destruct mines now and then call them an illegitimate weapon and ban them? The lack of consensus as to how best to address the landmine problem was made painfully clear by the impasse in meaningfully restricting the use of landmines at the Vienna conference.

Because the Landmines Campaign believes that the only solution to the problem is a total ban, it has supported changes to the CCW which would move the world toward a ban. These include the expansion of scope of the Convention to cover all circumstances, meaningful verification and compliance mechanisms and regular, automatic review of the treaty. While there was some movement in Vienna on scope and review, proposals for compliance mechanisms were fiercely resisted. The CCW will apparently now cover internal conflict – but *will not* be applicable in times of peace. The flaw is that this language

permits the state itself to define the level of conflict inside its borders, and thus, when the rules apply internally. In the end, consensus floundered on definitions and technical requirements, as various states sought loopholes that would allow them to continue using anti-personnel mines that they themselves produced or possessed in great number.

The only good news that came out of the conference was that an additional fourth protocol was agreed banning the use and transfer of blinding laser weapons. This has been criticised as not comprehensive enough. It bans the use of any laser weapon which has blinding as one of its combatative functions. However, this allows lasers to be used against optical equipment and does not sanction blinding as an "incidental or collateral effect of legitimate employment of laser systems". Also France announced a ban on the production of all anti-personnel mines, and a reduction in its stockpile of anti-personnel mines but did not mention a prohibition on the use of anti-personnel mines, so this is still not a call for a total ban.

Apparently, there will be another review conference in the year 2001. While this is positive, at this point the CCW has not been amended

to make such a five year review automatic. But the most egregious problem is that when the conference was suspended, there still was a huge gap in positions regarding verification and compliance mechanisms in the treaty. Many states, countries which have come together to write the laws to govern their own behaviour, remained unwilling to be held accountable to the laws that they themselves formulate.

The resumption of the review conference in Geneva will be a two-tier process. From 15-19 January 1996, countries will meet to try to resolve "technical" issues in the landmines protocol (e.g., self-destruct mechanisms and their life-span and reliability; technical specifications on detectability). Then from 22 April - 3 May the overall issues of the protocol and convention (e.g., scope, review) will be finalised. Between now and then, the Landmines Campaign will continue to press governments and to educate the public about the critical need for real change to the CCW if there is any hope of stemming the landmines crisis. Governments will be pressed to give more than lip service to the long term impact of landmines in their deliberations. Unless and until negotiators seriously consider the long term impact

of landmines, meaningful change to the CCW will not be possible. As long as the military perspective forms the framework of debate, few changes to the treaty will have any real impact on the lives of the millions of civilians who live in the midst of landmines.

National campaigns will ask those governments which have stated their support for an immediate ban on antipersonnel landmines to outline a timeframe to reach that goal that should be presented in Geneva. Those countries include: Austria, Belgium, Cambodia, Colombia, Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Ireland, Laos, Malaysia, Mexico, Mozambique, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Peru, Slovenia and Sweden. Minister Joan Burton at that conference stated that the Irish government is "calling for a total ban. We believe that a total ban is attainable in a reasonable time frame if only there is the political courage". Some of those who spoke against a total ban were Australia, South Africa, UK, Germany, Japan, India, China, Iran and Pakistan.

Campaigns will also continue to strengthen their work to create regional responses to the landmine problem. Perhaps if the international community as a

whole is not prepared to follow the lead of some countries which have made significant steps towards banning landmines (e.g., Belgium, France, Austria) more national initiatives can be stimulated and also regional pacts. Why not create, for example, a mine free Central America? Or South Africa? Or Southeast Asia? Increased demining funds could also be channelled to those regions that renounce landmines. In support of that approach, the Landmines Campaign will hold its next international landmines conference in southern Africa in late 1996.

In addition to the ongoing public awareness activities of both the International Landmine Campaign and its various national campaigns, the Campaign - in support of the leadership shown by UNHCR with its announcement at the Geneva landmines conference in July 1995 that it would cease dealing with companies that make landmines - will create a blacklist of producers and traders of landmines. Perhaps an increasingly educated public will help create the political will necessary to ban landmines.

*Jody Williams
Coordinator, International
Campaign to Ban Landmines*