

Book Review

Social Protection and Social Development: International Initiatives by Julie.L. Drolet, New York, London: Springer, 2013, 168 pp.

The book *Social Protection and Social Development: International Initiatives* discusses the concept of social protection from a comparative perspective. The emphasis is on low-income countries where social protection is viewed through the prism of economic development without humanitarian grounds. The book comprises a synopsis of theoretical approaches and selected empirical findings in social protection, rather than an extensive reference. The book consists of five chapters.

In Chapter One, the author argues the global economic downturn will exacerbate poverty, deprivation and inequality, all of which would undermine the progress towards Millennium Development Goals. The conventional wisdom in mainstream development policy circles recognizes social protection as an indispensable instrument for poverty reduction and social cohesion. Two main rationales for supporting the multidimensional role of social protection are: acknowledging social protection as a human right (see Chapter Two); identifying key role of the social protection floor in the achievement of a broader range of development goals, including social development, social determinants of health and social risk management among others (see Chapter Three). Chapter Four outlines the main features of social protection programming with a focus on climate change and disasters, adaptation and mitigation, environmental change, social protection and sustainable adaptation, the concept of sustainable development, and a risk-adjusted social protection floor. Chapter Five presents selected case studies of country development initiatives that have successfully achieved their objectives and promoted social justice within a socioeconomic sustainable environment.

The book follows academic conventions in terms of style and methodology, considering theoretical and empirical aspects. "The concept of social protection emerged out of an earlier social safety nets agenda, which was a prominent feature of the development policy in the 1980s and 1990s (p.23)," but the author fails to address how social protection evolved over time. Social protection arrangements have undergone profound transformation, initially concerned with protecting individuals from various contingencies in the workplace and evolved into a safety net, accommodating assistance to vulnerable segments of the population.

The introduction of redistributive mechanisms acted in favour of the pension systems to address individual risks in a more a collective approach,

ceteris paribus. The sustained character of underdevelopment in several countries forced policy makers to re-conceptualise the notion of social protection, suggesting a trajectory in the direction of universal provision. The author alternatively concentrated on the legal dimensions of social protection and the norms and policies, namely the pursuit of social justice, social equity, social cohesion, solidarity and stability.

Selected case studies on social protection floor initiatives are discussed, providing evidence of their feasibility, affordability and impact. The author outlines key features in development and implementation of each of the social protection floor case study initiatives, considering potential boundaries and dividing lines. Social protection initiatives enabled countries to undergo system reforms (Universal Coverage Scheme and Universal Pension Scheme, in Thailand); to bring about substantive and structural changes (Universal Family Allowance in Argentina); to coordinate mechanisms to maximize the impact of transfers (Child Support Grant in South Africa), and to foster the development of employment policies (the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in India), tailored to the needs of low-income countries as well as emerging economies.

The case studies also examine social protection floor from an innovational perspective. The new comprehensive approach empowers interaction between states and involved parties for the design and implementation of efficient and effective social protection policies. Most importantly, social protection floor exhibits distinctive characteristics with reference to universal contexts rather than specific contexts in order to fulfil the very different needs of all societies.

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