“The book uses the interdisciplinary methodology of pointing to similar ideas expressed by a variety of other authors in different fields: management theory by Douglas McGregor, psychotherapy by Carl Rogers, community organizing by Saul Alinsky, community education by Paulo Freire, spiritual counseling by Soren Kierkegaard, and economic development by E. F. Schumacher and myself.

In the end, the book speaks of a series of ways in which development agencies can experience blocks to learning and singles out the “long” confrontation between man and a situation,” which, according to Camus, can be so fruitful for the achievement of genuine progress in problem.”

—Albert O. Hirschman, Institute for Advance Study, from the Foreword

“Ellerman provides a compelling humanist understanding of how economic development aid can succeed, if only people and nations are enabled to help themselves.”

—William Greider, author, The Soul of Capitalism: Opening Paths to a Moral Economy

“A towering achievement. It outdoes Sen and Hirshman in its reach across economics, management theory, psychology, sociology, mathematics and philosophy. The result is a coherent alternative “way of seeing” the relationship between aid organizations based in rich countries and aid recipients based in poorer ones, and some practical suggestions on how to re-engage the aid agencies more as “helpers” than as “doers”. Along the way it fairly sizzles with insider insights into the workings of the World Bank.”

—Robert Hunter Wade, Development Studies Institute, London School of Economics

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BOOK HIGHLIGHTS

- This book calls for a rethinking of the World Bank in much the same way as Joseph Stiglitz’ Globalization and It’s Discontents challenges our notions about the IMF.
- Development assistance is not a “solved problem” (“if only we had enough money and experts”), it is more of a conundrum requiring subtle interventions quite different from the standard approach.
- Economic development is not a social engineering project like building a highway or dam; it is a form of adult social learning that cannot be “engineered” from the outside.
- In motivational terms, development must come from the inside out rather than from the outside in—so more money and more pressure pushing from the outside will not be effective.

David Ellerman is a visiting scholar in the Economics Department at the University of California Riverside, and formerly the advisor and speech-writer for Joseph Stiglitz during his years as the Chief Economist of the World Bank.

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