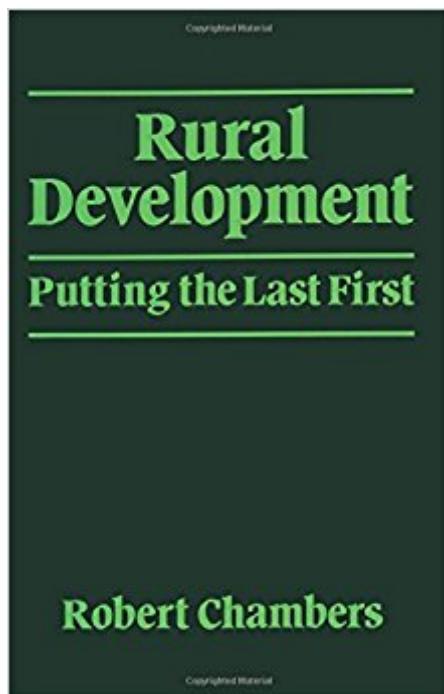


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Rural Development: Putting The Last First



Synopsis

Rural poverty is often unseen or misperceived by outsiders. Dr Chambers contends that researchers, scientists, administrators and fieldworkers rarely appreciate the richness and validity of rural people's knowledge or the hidden nature of rural poverty. This is a challenging book for all concerned with rural development, as practitioners, academics, students or researchers.

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'Chambers has successfully combined a lucid style and powerful use of words with a high degree of academic rigour . . . written with a directness and honesty.' (Community Development Journal)

Rural poverty is often unseen or misperceived by outsiders. Dr Chambers contends that researchers, scientists, administrators and fieldworkers rarely appreciate the richness and validity of rural people's knowledge or the hidden nature of rural poverty. This is a challenging book for all concerned with rural development, as practitioners, academics, students or researchers.

Robert Chambers makes 'Research & Development' a truly enlightening experience. Rural development issues are interestingly explored by asking western academically & or scientifically trained people to participate in collaborative projects where mutually beneficial outcomes may be derived for "experts" & "recipients". The anthropological method is engaged to allow 'western experts' to try to understand how others see, listen or physically experience their environment, &

how economically disadvantaged people manage to adequately sustain themselves, maintain soils & water using traditional knowledge systems & cultural practices that do not rely on consumer inputs such as agrochemicals, or fossil fuel or electricity powered machinery. This book was first published in 1983 but is now just as relevant to rural development issues in so-called 'first world' countries where there are competing 'cultures' of farming practices. 'Conventional' farming practitioners & researchers have increasingly focused on increased productivity derived from increased inputs of chemicals & energy. In contrast many 'Organic', 'Community supported agriculture' & 'No-tillage' farming practitioners have had their 'unconventional' practices challenged by their families, academic & community peers, but never-the-less are arguably more economically & ecologically successful & sustainable despite a relative dearth of scientific research to assist the development or adoption of these practices. A 'must read' for experts with humility, & who are not afraid to be challenged to learn from non-experts.

Chambers is a giant in his field to be sure, but his book boasts extensive insight into the arena of development. His observations and suggestions are applicable on a grand scale as effective strategies for beginning successful development across the developing world. By pointing out the 5 key aspects of poverty, the poverty itself, physical weakness, isolation, vulnerability, and powerlessness; Chambers offers a means in which effective development strategies can be applied to combat such factors. Chambers is also keen on pointing out how the development community have made mistakes, and does not mince words. He is quick to point out the evils and ineffectiveness of the academic world and how they have worked against development in the past, even though the man was an academic. That criticism aside however, his points about the traps of academia, the biases transferred to the third world by outsiders with varying attitudes, and his suggestions for combating poverty across the globe make for a seminal work in the field of development policy, and is a must read for anyone who is interested in studying the development field.

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