

BOOK REVIEWS

The SYNERGY of Microfinance by Binod B. Nayak, SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd., Pages: 349, Price: ₹ 995.

The SYNERGY of Microfinance' is a unique book which has explored that access to micro-credit is no panacea for winning the war against the entrenched multi-dimensional world of poverty and clearly illustrated that accumulating impact assessment over the years have yet to corroborate the claim that with access to micro-credit, poor people could move out of poverty on a mass scale.

The author has taken painstaking efforts to explain that given the multi-dimensional nature of world of poverty, it is not just credit, but other financial instruments such as micro-savings, micro-insurance, micro-leasing and improved payment systems for banking services, including remittances are urgently needed by the poor in enhancing their chances to win their battles against poverty. Sincere attempts have been made to piece together the documents and reports and to highlight the key theme of interest to policymakers and practitioners. There is no doubt that the compilation of so many facts for this book is a challenging task because of the very existence of a large number of actors and stakeholders as well as the rapid growth of innovative changes around the Self-help Groups. Needless to add, this book is a must for every micro-finance practitioner who accesses the factor responsible for the growth process of the Self-help Groups in almost all geographical regions of the country as a whole. This book is a rare blending of qualitative and quantitative analysis with policy and action relevance inputs

for the complete understanding of the functioning of the Micro Finance Institutions.

The book started with an elaborate Introduction chapter and ended with the 'Synergy' Chapter describing the expected phases in the micro-finance sector. In total, there are 12 chapters in all, each part redefining an important aspect of the growth process of the Self-help Groups. Some notable points from some chapters are illustrated below reflecting the richness of the book.

The Chapter III entitled as 'Borrowing and Saving: A Critique', the author highlighted how access to archaic financial instruments that the poor have been accessing through informal institutions such as the moneylenders have been major bottlenecks in managing their cash flow, mitigating exposure to specific risks and taking advantage of opportunities to leverage their capabilities to get ahead.

In Chapter IV on 'How Small Loans can Make a Big Difference' the author disclosed that while credit is a powerful tool that could help the poor in fighting poverty, it has to be used judiciously and in a balanced manner along with other financial tools such as micro-savings and micro-insurance. This is particularly true in the context of accumulating evidence that benefits of micro-credit could be more modest in comparison to the initial expectations.

In Chapter V on 'Micro-credit' the author has stressed that one needs to emphasise that accessing largely mono-product world of micro-finance consisting of micro-credit only is no panacea for winning the war against the

entrenched multi-dimensional world of poverty. Access to savings, insurance, improved payment systems for money transfer and other financial transactions, lease finance and other non-financial complementary services are also vital for the poor, in order to improve their chances to fight poverty with greater success.

In Chapter VII on 'Microinsurance', the author explained that the reason why micro-credit expanded rapidly around the world has to do with the fact that it has a natural demand, it is a reasonably homogeneous product and it can be explained easily to the poor. Besides, the micro-finance industry has been able to deliver poor-friendly micro-credit products, which have been proven to deliver value in comparison to credit products in the informal sector such as from the moneylenders, pawnbrokers and payday lenders.

In the tenth Chapter on 'Complementary Non-financial Services', the author conveyed that the delivery of a wide range of financial products at the grassroot level is already challenging enough for the industry, which operates in an ecosystem of poor infrastructure and dearth of qualified professionals and management personnel. While there are those who would like the MFIs to deliver a variety of complementary services to the poor, it is believed that by collaborating with other private and public sector institutions specialised in providing these services, the quality, cost and effectiveness of these programmes can be ensured.

Finally, it can be outrightly stated that this book is a must reference for those who want to delve into the gamut of origin and growth of micro-credit process as well as interested to know the status of various policy decisions taken by multiple agencies in facilitating the growth and achievement of

SHGs in rural pockets of the country. Further, the author should be highly appreciated as the book highlights most of the issues connected with MFIs in a most comprehensive way and projects the growth process in a most fascinating manner.

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Agricultural Modernisation and Social Change in Indian Villages, by S. N. Chaudhary, 2014, Published by Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd., A/15 – 16, Commercial Block, Mohan Garden, New Delhi – 110 059, India, pp. 143, ₹450.

This volume has been published by S. N. Chaudhary and his team, based on the study conducted in Madhya Pradesh with financial support from ICSSR, New Delhi. Modernisation in agricultural operation as a process leads to economic development. Author has attempted to analyse the process of modernisation in agriculture development during the pre and post-green revolution period that has led to the economic development. The purpose of the study is to know the process of change in social structure and social institutions in the present context of economic development. This volume is an outcome of the study conducted in three villages of Chhindwara district of central Madhya Pradesh, viz., Simaria, Jaam and Chargaon wherein Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) intervention on farm production, change in cropping pattern, income levels and expenditure incurred and finally on social institutions and cultural practices. Author presented eight chapters in this volume. In the first chapter, he discussed about the concept of agricultural modernisation, agriculture and economic development, challenges before agriculture, green revolution, its implications and food security. Further, Prof. Chaudhary