

(Mobile ebook) Making Aid Work (Boston Review Books)

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*Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee, Alice H. Amsden, Robert H. Bates, Jagdish N. Bhagwati, Angus Deaton, Nicholas Stern*

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**Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee, Alice H. Amsden, Robert H. Bates, Jagdish N. Bhagwati, Angus Deaton, Nicholas Stern : Making Aid Work (Boston Review Books)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Making Aid Work (Boston Review Books):

1 of 6 people found the following review helpful. It's just experts debating experts about inexpertiseBy Theodore A. RushtonThe glaring error of this book is its expertise in navel gazing: It's experts debating experts about inexpert

masses and what expert experts should do with expertise to uplift the dumb masses. The result is a range of expert opinions about expert policies designed by experts who are expert enough to know what undeveloped folks want without asking, "What is your ill-informed opinion of our expertise?" It's like politicians who believe, "In my modest and humble opinion, I'm better than you because I was elected and you weren't." In this book, aid experts assess aid because they know all about aid, while recipients remain ignorant about the reasons they need aid and what it is supposed to do for them. For example, there were several references to schools in India where 25 percent of teachers were absent on any given day, only 45 percent of those present were teaching while the rest were drinking tea, talking to each other or reading newspapers. Okay. I didn't find any analysis of why 100 percent of teachers were not teaching. Is that how MIT, where Banerjee teaches, is run? If a social program doesn't work, surely the first response is to ask those who are affected why it doesn't work. Talking only to experts simply affirms the expertise of experts and the ignorance of everyone else. Sadly, this book is very inexpert. 12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. All in all this is an excellent work. By T. Downing I previously read and reviewed another intriguing release from MIT's Boston Review Press (*God and the Welfare State*, also recommended) as it was a very thought provoking treatment of its subject. So, to see if that work was going to be indicative of the series, I picked this one next based on the topic. To start out, this is a very narrowly focused work. It does not treat the entire subject of international aid. Rather, it approaches the question under the basic assumption that aid does in fact work. If you are looking for a broad treatment, you will have to consult other authors for the other side of the dialogue. The book's format more resembles a panel discussion than a social science text. The main contributor, Abhijit Banerjee, asks various respected authors for their opinions on one of his thoughtful dissertations about how to "make aid work". The various and often disagreeing points of view add depth to the field and invoke historical, practical, political and emotional considerations of the topic. For this alone, the book is definitely worth the reading. However, it adds a collateral discussion on research design. The way the various authors, especially Banerjee, identify and discuss the limitations of his research is refreshing; especially in a topic that does have significant political overtones. Banerjee not only brings up the limitations to his designs that he identified, but he also discusses the limitations brought forth in peer review. Some he dismisses and others he embraces; but how he incorporates these research design issues into the work is exceptional. I recommend it to anyone interested in bettering their ability to conduct or evaluate quasi-experimental research design for any social science. I only have two issues with the book. The first is, as I mentioned earlier, it stands on the premise that aid does work. I would like to see the same level of discussion put behind a treatment that suggests aid does NOT work. Second, I am aware that this is meant to be in a discussion format. However, the absence of footnotes and source data for the large number of stated facts is irritating and disappointing. Any scholarly work regardless of format should include references. All in all this is an excellent work. If you are interested in the aid field or in quasi-experimental research design then this will be a very rewarding and quick read for you.

With more than a billion people now living on less than a dollar a day, and with eight million dying each year because they are simply too poor to live, most would agree that the problem of global poverty is our greatest moral challenge. The large and pressing practical question is how best to address that challenge. Although millions of dollars flow to poor countries, the results are often disappointing. In *Making Aid Work*, Abhijit Banerjee--an "aid optimist"--argues that aid has much to contribute, but the lack of analysis about which programs really work causes considerable waste and inefficiency, which in turn fuels unwarranted pessimism about the role of aid in fostering economic development. Banerjee challenges aid donors to do better. Building on the model used to evaluate new drugs before they come on the market, he argues that donors should assess programs with field experiments using randomized trials. In fact, he writes, given the number of such experiments already undertaken, current levels of development assistance could focus entirely on programs with proven records of success in experimental conditions. Responding to his challenge, leaders in the field--including Nicholas Stern, Raymond Offenheiser, Alice Amsden, Ruth Levine, Angus Deaton, and others--question whether randomized trials are the most appropriate way to evaluate success for all programs. They raise broader questions as well, about the importance of aid for economic development and about the kinds of interventions (micro or macro, political or economic) that will lead to real improvements in the lives of poor people around the world. With one in every six people now living in extreme poverty, getting it right is crucial.

About the Author Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee is the Ford Foundation Professor of Economics in the department of economics at MIT, a director of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab at MIT, and a past president of the Bureau for Research in Economic Analysis of Development (BREAD). Alice H. Amsden was Barton T. Weller Professor of Political Economy in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.