



## **Poverty and Participation in Civil Society**

Yogesh Atal and Else Øyen (eds)

CROP and UNESCO

Papers presented at the UNESCO/CROP/ISSC Round Table at the UN Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen March 7, 1995.

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*Francine Fournier*

*Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences  
UNESCO*

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Review of CROP/UNESCO publication *Poverty and Participation in Civil Society*

by retired Indian high court judge, the honourable **V. R. Krishna Iyer**

The review was published in The Hindu, Tuesday January 27th 1998

**Every page of this book is a treasure.** The UNESCO during the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in March 1995 had organised a Round Table to discuss the issue of participation of the poor in civil society. The proceedings, duly edited by Yogesh Atal and Else Øyen, are made available through this book. Those who have an egalitarian outlook must be deeply distressed by the pervasive poverty and macro-marginalisation of people in the contemporary world. The escalation of economic marginalisation is appalling and the poor have no voice at the moment then silence speaks. Is it heard? Will this ballooning constituency of indigency burst, demanding empowerment? How can the world's poor assert their right to justice, development and to acceptance of a new paradigm of progress? These are disturbing questions for which the Copenhagen Summit provided no final answers.

The United Nations declared 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty and, on the World Summit's suggestion, the decade that followed as the International Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. The decade has not yet died though the deprived are dying in larger numbers. But the rising revolution of frustrations is hotting up. In this context. The book under review is relevant to develop an agenda for research and reflection and, more importantly, for affirmative action.

The chapters revolve round the poor and raise many questions. A more equitable world, a just global human order and the process of building bridges between the world's indigent and the world's affluent are concerns of absorbing interest and burning grimness because one billion people are living in dire poverty. It is indubitable that a vast humanity suffers from being ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, ill-educated, probably even due to illiteracy, and ill-health. But the question is how to eradicate poverty? How to assume that poverty will not recur? Does wealth provide an answer to all ills?