Prescription for disaster

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The Bank claims that the health of the poor will improve if its recommendation is followed. This is far from the truth. In fact, the major causes of disease and death in the third world are nutritional disorders and communicable diseases, which were conquered in the West long ago. Historically the experiences of the developed countries show that the major reduction in infant mortality and increase in life expectancy resulted from an increase in food availability, education, income, and, along with expansion of public

Despite the progress made by the third world compared to the colonial period, the struggle against infectious and parasitic diseases has yet to be won. The Bank's argument for cutbacks in public funding while increasing the role of private capital in the health sphere is going to affect the poor adversely most of all. The Bank regards human beings as inputs to growth, whose cost and contribution need to be measured for optimum choices. Not surprisingly, in keeping with this ideology, the Bank's 1993 Report stresses the need to obtain value for money in the health sector.

In Great Britain and achieves only a marginal level of health indices. The recent report by the American Medical Association shows that patient satisfaction is very poor in the US. Since profit is the main criterion in private enterprise, private health care will concentrate on programs that provide profitable services more than is necessary. Profit rather than patients' welfare becomes the principal motivator for lowering government spending in order to reduce taxes might undermine general health care.

Over the years, the Bank has not only served as the intellectual leader of 'free'-market-led development, but also contributored to no small measure towards ensuring that the third world opts for 'free-market' solutions rather than part of these policies has been drastic cuts in public spending and various welfare measures. But in a number of areas, such as health, education, environment, infrastructural services, the markets themselves are not as friendly as they should be if they are the prime determinants.

The Bank's 1993 Report emphasizes cost-effective government spending and promotes market incentives can deliver better results.

Education and raising incomes, especially for women, is an important way to improve the health situation in the third world. The Bank ignores that the subcontinent in the 1950s in the developed countries, also after independence in the third world countries, in reducing mortality and raising life expectancy is essentially because of control of communicable diseases including deaths from maternal and perinatal causes, and here public spending played a key role. Despite the programs made by the third world countries to the colonial period, the struggle against diseases like diarrhoea, TB, malaria, worm infestation, etc., i.e. infectious and non-infectious diseases, has yet to be won. Improved living conditions and improved knowledge on health care, particularly of women, in the third world affects the health status, as evidenced earlier by Kerala in India, Sri Lanka, China, Costa Rica, etc. In short, the Bank argument for cutback in public funding while increasing the role of private capital in the health sphere is going to affect the poor adversely most of all.

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