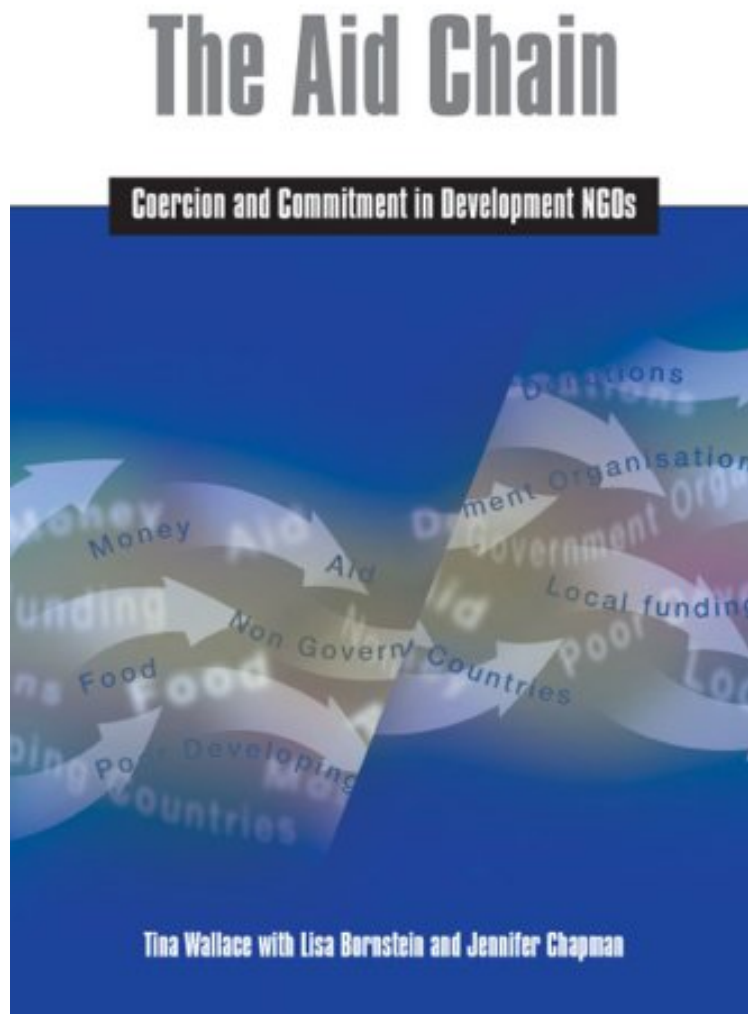


(Ebook free) The Aid Chain: Coercion and Commitment in Development NGOs

The Aid Chain: Coercion and Commitment in Development NGOs

Tina Wallace

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Tina Wallace : The Aid Chain: Coercion and Commitment in Development NGOs before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Aid Chain: Coercion and Commitment in Development NGOs:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Invaluable Research! By peasmould Everyone working in poor country development should read this very urgently. It is a true "expos". Although the "in depth" case studies are in Uganda and Africa, the findings apply to structured development aid organizations, government and NGO, working everywhere. Tina and her team's research shows clearly what hundreds of thousands of people who are living off the

aid money in the aid organizations know deep down, but are usually afraid to admit in the open. This structure is totally inappropriate - it is just welfare for aid workers. It leaves little lasting benefit for the "customers" - the rural poor, in this case in Africa. The research is very objective, looking at how aid is planned and delivered and how decisions are made. It looks at where the real power lies, and shows it is far away from those who know what's really needed in the field, and usually prevents them from doing anything sustainable. It shows aid organizations are using an archaic industrial business model, designed for delivering a narrow range of known products in known and stable markets. This can't work when each market is different - different needs, different cultures and different conditions along many dimensions. The book is heavy going at times, because of its thoroughness. Each little aspect of what happens where, its impact, the reasons for everything, the supporting evidence, etc., are covered carefully and in great detail. However, it is well worth sifting through, or even just picking critical parts to start with (like the introduction, the case studies and the conclusions). The meticulous data collection and analysis serves to prove beyond any doubt how badly the aid process is broken, and begins to provide a framework for evaluating alternatives. The book tries to be positive in its conclusion, but doesn't really succeed. Objectively it can't, based on the research, which shows that, recognizing poor results and trying to get better, the organizations driving this are going for MORE of the wrong kind of planning and management controls, taking power away from the grassroots and making themselves ever more wasteful and even less effective. Neutered by log-frames and arrogant, ill-informed hierarchical management, lots of aid workers are having nice lives living off the charity of the West, but those who care about the results are deeply frustrated. Let's hope this book will give more of them the confidence to speak out. Sadly the Africans have no chance of ever taking ownership of the right development steps for them under the weight of this approach. It was so telling that none of Tina's sources would allow themselves to be identified, and some later actually publicly argued directly against what they told Tina privately. My conclusion based on this excellent detailed analysis was that Africa and the world would be better served by shutting down most aid organizations completely, unless they totally reinvent themselves and turn development on its head. That means putting all the brains and spending at the grassroots level, creating a model where they are consultants to African-led initiatives. Al Gore's quote of Upton Sinclair comes to mind reading this: "It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on him not understanding it". Yes, different topic, but this book could very appropriately have been titled "An Inconvenient Truth". If we don't face up to it, the effect in Africa could be just as disastrous as climate change, and perhaps more rapid.

Significant proportions of aid already flow through the non-governmental sector, but questions are increasingly being asked about the role of NGOs and whether they can deliver on their ambitious claims. This study examines conditionality and mutual commitment between international aid donors and recipient NGOs, North and South. Fieldwork and case study material from Uganda and South Africa are used to support the authors contention that the fast changing aid sector has--in the context of a dynamic policy environment--encouraged the mainstreaming of a managerial approach that does not admit of any analysis of power relations or cultural diversity. This increasing--essentially technical-- definition of the roles of NGOs has worked to limit the extent of the very development that the organizations were initially established to promote.

"[A] scholarly and readable guide....this work will be a classic." (Tony Benn) About the Author Tina Wallace is an independent development consultant who has specialized in management and gender issues. She has studied and taught in Africa and Europe and has extensive NGO experience. She is now based in the UK, and teaches at Oxford Brookes University. Lisa Bornstein worked for many years at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal, where she was head of the SA research, and she is now teaching and researching at the University of McGill in Canada. She specializes in planning and development issues. Jennifer Chapman is currently working freelance, after three years heading an action research program for ActionAid on the evaluation of advocacy work by development NGOs. She has extensive research and practical experience with NGOs and is currently developing a manual on understanding and learning from advocacy and policy work.