

FOREWORD BY AMARTYA SEN

Fully
revised and
updated 2nd edition

FROM POVERTY TO POWER

HOW **ACTIVE** CITIZENS
AND **EFFECTIVE** STATES
CAN **CHANGE** THE WORLD

DUNCAN GREEN

FROM POVERTY TO POWER

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'This second edition is a must read for those wanting data, analysis and positive guidelines about how to react to the cuts and financial setbacks in the West or build on the new opportunities opened by the Arab Spring in the South.'

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Jonathan Glennie, Overseas Development Institute

'This book does justice to raising the spectre of inequalities ... between the world's richest and poorest people and countries.'

Bineta Diop, Executive Director, Femmes Africa Solidarité

'Duncan Green uses numerous case studies to demonstrate this book is not merely an academic textbook but a manual for real, practical and lasting social change.'

Andrew Dodgshon, Tribune

'The enormous breadth of this book, along with the author's clear style and coherent presentation, makes it an indispensable key text for students of international development.'

Alexia Rogers-Wright, Department of Geography, University of Hull

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CONTENTS

List of figures, tables, and boxes	vii
About the author	viii
Foreword: Amartya Sen	ix
Preface to the Second Edition	xii
Acknowledgements	xiii
List of acronyms	xv
PART 1 INTRODUCTION	1
The unequal world	3
PART 2 POWER AND POLITICS	15
The political roots of development	17
I have rights, therefore I am	21
How change happens: A revolution for Bolivia's Chiquitano people	27
I believe, therefore I am	29
I read, therefore I am	34
I surf, therefore I am	43
We organise, therefore we are	48
How change happens: Winning women's rights in Morocco	55
I own, therefore I am	57
I vote, therefore I am	64
I steal, therefore I am: Natural resources, corruption, and development	69
I rule, therefore I am	73
From poverty to power	84
PART 3 POVERTY AND WEALTH	85
An economics for the twenty-first century	87
Living off the land	98
How change happens: The fishing communities of Tikamgarh	120
The changing world of work	122
Private sector, public interest	138
Going for growth	148
How change happens: Two African success stories (Botswana and Mauritius)	159
Sustainable markets	161

FROM POVERTY TO POWER

PART 4 HUMAN SECURITY	163
Living with risk	165
Social protection	173
How change happens: India's campaign for a National Rural Employment Guarantee	180
Finance and vulnerability	182
Hunger and famine	186
HIV, AIDS, and other health risks	191
How change happens: South Africa's Treatment Action Campaign	200
The risk of natural disaster	202
Climate change: Mitigation, adaptation, organisation	212
Living on the edge: Africa's pastoralists	221
Violence and conflict	225
Shocks and change	236
PART 5 THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM	239
Who rules the world?	241
The international financial system	244
The international trading system	260
The international aid system	289
How change happens: The 2005 Gleneagles Agreements	311
International rules and norms	313
The international system for humanitarian relief and peace	317
How change happens: Landmines, an arms control success story	333
Climate change	335
Global governance in the twenty-first century	351
PART 6 THE FOOD AND FINANCIAL CRISES OF 2008–11	353
The food and financial crises of 2008–11	355
The global financial crisis	356
Living on a spike: The food price crises of 2008 and 2011	362
PART 7 CONCLUSION	367
A new deal for a new century	369
Notes	371
Bibliography	409
Background papers and case studies	447
Glossary	451
Index	457

LIST OF FIGURES

3.1	A safe and just space for humanity to thrive in	94
3.2	Assessing developmental impacts	95
3.3	More equal initial land distributions go together with higher economic growth	100
3.4	Supply chain pressures create precarious employment	129
4.1	How vulnerability affects livelihoods	168
4.2	Causes of premature death worldwide, circa 2009	172
6.1	Food price indices, 1990–2012	362

LIST OF TABLES

2.1	Great land reforms of the twentieth century	61
3.1	Southern TNCs. Countries with the most companies in the top 50 non-financial TNCs from developing and transition economies	142
3.2	The top 10 non-financial TNCs from developing and transition economies	143
5.1	The Millennium Development Goals	291
5.2	Three grand narratives on aid: Sachs, Easterly, and Collier compared	294

LIST OF BOXES

2.1	The golden rule	32
2.2	Are effective states compatible with active citizens?	76
3.1	Fisheries: Managing a finite resource	104
3.2	A beginner's guide to sustainable agriculture	108
3.3	The sweet taste of success in Colombia	112
3.4	Niche solutions: Fairtrade and organics	114
3.5	India's women organise	133
3.6	Can trade agreements promote labour rights?	136
3.7	A tale of two tigers	153
3.8	The disadvantages of comparative advantage	154
4.1	The Basic Income Guarantee: The next BIG idea?	179
4.2	Coping with hunger	187
4.3	SARS: What global collaboration can achieve	196
4.4	The Asian tsunami of 2004	205
4.5	Cuba vs Katrina: Lessons in disaster risk reduction	208
4.6	Climate change, water, and conflict in Central Asia	215
5.1	Migrants make a difference	275
5.2	Earning a 'licence to operate'	280
5.3	Corporate responsibility or accountability? Voluntary schemes vs regulation	285

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Duncan Green has been working in international development for 30 years. He is currently Senior Strategic Adviser in Oxfam GB where, from 2004 to 2012, he was Head of Research. He is the author of several books on Latin America, including *Faces of Latin America* (1991, fourth edition 2012) and *Silent Revolution: The Rise and Crisis of Market Economics in Latin America* (2003). He has been a Senior Policy Adviser on trade and development at the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Policy Analyst on trade and globalisation at CAFOD, and is a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies.

FOREWORD

George Bernard Shaw argued more than 100 years ago (in the preface to his 1907 play *Major Barbara*) that, 'The greatest of evils and the worst of crimes is poverty'. This certainly goes well beyond noting the fact that poverty is a huge tragedy, which ruins the lives of a great many people across the world. The immense tragedy of poverty is obvious enough: lives are battered, happiness stifled, creativity destroyed, freedoms eradicated by the misfortunes of poverty. But Bernard Shaw was not talking, on this occasion, about the hardship of poverty, or the misfortune that goes with it. He was commenting on the causation and consequences of poverty – that it is bred through evil and ends up being a crime. Why so? And how is that evil bred?

The classic view that poverty is just a shortage of income may be well established in our minds, but ultimately we have to see poverty as unfreedoms of various sorts: the lack of freedom to achieve even minimally satisfactory living conditions. Low income can certainly contribute to that, but so can a number of other influences, such as the lack of schools, absence of health facilities, unavailability of medicines, the subjugation of women, hazardous environmental features, lack of jobs (something that affects more than the earning of incomes). Poverty can be reduced through expanding these facilities, but in order to guarantee that, what is needed is an enhancement of the power of people, especially of the afflicted people, to make sure that the facilities are expanded and the deficiencies removed.

People remain unempowered as a result of a variety of complex processes. The predicament of the poor need not be the result of deliberate cultivation of asymmetry of power by identifiable 'evil-doers'. But no matter how the deprivations develop, the gross asymmetries do not correct themselves. Quiet acceptance – by the victims and by others – of the inability of a great many people to achieve minimally effective capabilities and to have basic substantive freedoms acts as a huge barrier to social change. And so does the absence of public outrage at the terrible helplessness of millions of people. Thus the social evil draws not just on those who positively contribute to keeping people down, but also on all the people who are ready to tolerate the thoroughly unacceptable predicaments of millions of fellow human beings. The nature of this evil does not relate principally, even primarily, to the diagnosis of specific evil-doers. We have to see how the actions and inactions of a great many persons together lead to this social evil, and how a change of our priorities – our policies, our institutions, our individual and joint actions – can help to eliminate the atrocity of poverty.

FROM POVERTY TO POWER

This book from Oxfam explores many different ways in which poverty is being fought through the empowerment of the people whose deprivations relate ultimately to their helplessness in a badly organised world. Under the lead authorship of Duncan Green, the book discusses a number of different types of initiative across the world that have enhanced and expanded the powers of the powerless and through that have reduced the unfreedoms that characterise the poverty of the deprived. In bringing about these changes, the state obviously can – and does – have an important role to play, and yet the state is not the only responsible agency that can make a difference, nor is it the only instrument for tackling the general evil that society tends to tolerate and accept. If the evil of poverty and the crime associated with it can come through the actions and inactions of a great many persons, the remedy too can come from the co-operative efforts of people at large.

What the report calls ‘active citizenship’ can be a very effective way of seeking and securing solutions to these pervasive problems of powerlessness and unfreedom. The reader is told about various efforts at enhancing the power of the unempowered, varying from the pursuit of women’s rights in Morocco to the international campaign to ban landmines around the world. They can all make a huge difference in fighting intolerable and unacceptable deprivations. One case study after another is invoked, presented, and investigated to show how changes can be brought about through deliberate and organised efforts.

This book, which I hope will be widely read, is important for at least three distinct reasons. First, through discussing the ways and means of reducing and removing deprivation, the case studies bring out the role of powerlessness in generating deprivation and the effectiveness of empowerment in overcoming widespread deprivations.

Second, studies of this kind serve as much-needed correctives to the growing tendency to think of poverty removal mainly in terms of economic growth. There has certainly been some success in many countries in the world in reducing the proportion of people with very low incomes through economic growth, a success that is significant enough even though the achievements are often exaggerated. But the attraction – even the intoxication – of this success has also contributed to the mistaken understanding that (1) raising income is the uniquely privileged way – indeed the only secure way – of removing the unfreedoms of poverty (this downplays the role of general enhancement of economic, social, and political opportunities) and (2) high economic growth must necessarily be a sure-fire method of raising the incomes of the poor (this understates the social changes that are needed for expanding the freedom of the deprived to get a reasonable share in market-based aggregate economic growth). It is critically important, as a corrective, to clarify, with actual illustrations, that poverty has many dimensions, and that the removal of deprivation calls for much more than economic growth (important as it is).

Third, the recounting of a number of successful initiatives in removing deprivation through empowerment helps also to confront the pervasive pessimism that has become so common these days concerning the possibility of deliberately bringing about the changes that are needed. An exaggerated belief in the frailty of public efforts – whether of the state or of active citizens – generates a climate of cynicism and provides comfortable grounds for inaction and torpor, even when the widespread deprivations and sufferings are fairly well recognised. The recounting of what is actually being achieved – and how these achievements come about – can be very important as an antidote to inactivity based on exaggerated pessimism.

Bernard Shaw may have chosen unusual words to characterise poverty as an ‘evil’ and a ‘crime’, but underlying that verbal choice is clearly a call for action, through a more forceful social analysis of the nature and causation of poverty that can lead to more determined efforts to eliminate the iniquity of poverty. In telling us what can be achieved by ordinary people through organised action, this book generates hope even as it enhances understanding of what is involved in the removal of poverty. The world does need hope as well as the know-how, and we have reason to be grateful for what we get from this important study of a rich collection of collaborative social action.

Amartya Sen

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Revising for a second edition is likely to be a nerve-wracking exercise for any author. History moves blithely on, leaving a trail of wrecked and abandoned theses in its wake; critics and reviewers shine a floodlight on the weaknesses; one's own thinking (hopefully) develops.

Since *From Poverty to Power* was written in 2007, tumultuous events have battered the global system – financial and economic implosions, food price chaos and political upheaval. Yet (a pleasant surprise), these events have largely upheld the central arguments of the book – the central role of effective states and active citizens in bringing about genuine human development, and the primacy of ‘the national’ in development, compared to an often exaggerated emphasis on ‘the international’.

Discussion of climate change, once framed largely in terms of future threats, is clearly now an issue of present dangers, not least in the multi-layered impact on poor and vulnerable communities. While this urgency has sadly not moved climate negotiators, it has helped bring a new intellectual seriousness to development thinking. Ecosystems have boundaries, and we had better not cross them. Oxfam's GROW campaign, launched in 2011, arose from just such a reflection.

Critiques of the book have largely focused on the role of the private sector, and here my thinking has indeed evolved. I realised I had downplayed a crucial point: Markets and companies can indeed largely be left to states and citizens to sort out, as I argued in 2008. But the nature and exercise of economic power is a vital aspect of the politics of development that warrants much more attention than I gave it.

Perhaps the biggest transformation for me as an author has grown out of the digital revolution. A blog launched to coincide with the publication of this book [www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p] rapidly acquired a life (and readership) of its own, offering a level of spontaneity and interaction with readers that a book can never provide.

One aspect of the book has particularly flourished within Oxfam – the focus on ‘how change happens’, a phrase that inspires development practitioners to ask good questions. Though the theoretical annex on this subject in the first edition rapidly became outdated and is not here (it is still available online), ‘How Change Happens’ will be the topic for my next book. Now there's a hostage to fortune.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The word ‘editor’ hardly does justice to Mark Fried’s enormous contribution to this book. Over both editions, he has used his unique combination of editorial skills and deep knowledge of development to shape the text, spot gaps, and propose improvements – all this with unfailing patience and good humour. Seemingly infinite reserves of stamina and good humour have also allowed Anna Coryndon to manage the project from its conception, through byzantine consultations, to final product, her extraordinary eye for detail spotting whenever things were starting to unravel. Jonathan Mazliah proved an equally perfectionist project manager on the second edition. It has been a delight to work with all three.

I would like to thank Oxfam for ensuring that I had the time and resources to get this job done. In particular Phil Bloomer, and before him Justin Forsyth, offered unswerving support and brilliant advice throughout. Others who played a crucial role include John Ambler, Jaime Atienza, Jan Bouke Wijbrandi, Becky Buell, Sam Bickersteth, Marjolein Brouwer, Celine Charveriat, James Ensor, Gonzalo Fanjul, Lot Felizco, Jeremy Hobbs, Avinash Kumar, Richard King, Adam Leach, Tom van der Lee, Luk Tak Chuen, and Chris Roche. Space forces me to be selective – the full list of those I would like to thank is on the book’s website. Dozens of Oxfam specialists, and others, have also contributed background papers and case studies – these are listed in the section ‘Background papers and case studies’.

Outside Oxfam, numerous academics and others have offered expert advice. They include Saamah Abdallah, Chris Adam, Sabina Alkire, Supriya Akerkar, Catherine Barber, Peter Bakvis, Nicholas Bayne, Stefan Baskerville and first-year students at University College, Oxford, Jo Beall, David Booth, Saturnino M. Borrás Jr, Oygunn Brynildsen, Diana Cammack, Ha-Joon Chang, Martha Chen, Anuradha Chenoy, Peter Chowla, John Clark, Chris Cramer, Paddy Coulter, James Darcy, Michael Ellis, Rosalind Eyben, Julian Filochowski, Sean Fox, Verena Fritz, John Gaventa, Jonathan Hellin, Mark Heywood, Rolph van der Hoeven, Richard Jolly, Jonathan di John, Roman Krznaric, David Lewis, Matthew Lockwood, Ian MacAuslan, Ruth Mayne, Branko Milanovic, Nuria Molina, Jamie Morrison, Sarah Mulley, Karma Nabulsi, Peter Newell, Sheila Page, Jenny Pearce, Jeff Powell, the staff and students of Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford, Vicky Randall, Amartya Sen, Frances Stewart, Pablo Suarez, Jim Sumberg, Michael Taylor, Kevin Watkins, David Woodward, Andrew Wyatt, Roger Yates and Dan Yeo. The author assumes full responsibility for all opinions and any errors.

FROM POVERTY TO POWER

Finally, I would like to thank my family, Catherine, Calum and Finlay, for putting up with a self-obsessed author in the house (again).

A list of the non-government and civil society organisations and networks supported by Oxfam that are mentioned in this book is available on the book's website: www.fp2p.org

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
ART	antiretroviral treatment/therapy
ARV	antiretroviral
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
AU	African Union
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CSO	civil society organisation
CSR	corporate social responsibility
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFA	Education for All
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EPZ	export-processing zone
EU ETS	European Union Emissions Trading Scheme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDI	foreign direct investment
FTA	free trade agreement
G7	the seven richest nations (USA, UK, Germany, Japan, Italy, France, and Canada)
G8	G7 nations + Russia
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
GBS	general budget support
GCAP	Global Call for Action against Poverty
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GDP	gross domestic product
GNP	gross national product
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Reduction Initiative

FROM POVERTY TO POWER

HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	internally displaced person
IFI	international financial institution
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IHL	international humanitarian law
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	international non-government organisation
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LDC	least developed country
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MDRI	Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO	non-government organisation
OCHA	UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
ODA	overseas development assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute, UK
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ORT	oral rehydration therapy
PRGF	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (IMF)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IMF and World Bank)
SAP	structural adjustment programme
SAPRI	Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative
SARS	severe acute respiratory syndrome
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
SWAP	sector-wide approach
TNC	transnational corporation
TRIMS	Trade-Related Investment Measures
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UNCAC	UN Convention Against Corruption
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTO	World Trade Organisation