Local Knowledge on Development

The Missing Link in the Research-Policy Nexus of Sustainable Development

Atal Ahmadzai[1]

[1] Graduate School-Newark, Rutgers University, USA

Currently working at school of Government and Public Policy, University of Arizona, USA

Correspondence: Atal Ahmadzai, School of Government and Public Policy, University of Arizona, USA. E-mail: ahmadzai.atal@gmail.com

Abstract

A sense of urgency has developed to increase efforts towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda. Latest assessments recommend an urgent change of course in the implementation of the Agenda, should the pledge of 'Leaving No One Behind' be realized. In addition to others, challenges associated with the evaluation function of the Agenda are threatening its successful implementation. Technical challenges and political sensitivities impede the practicality of the evaluation function, thereby off-tracking progress. The lack of enough human and material resources at national and international levels, underdeveloped data systems of developing countries, the lack of non-DAC aid data; and measurability issues of some of the goals and targets are the technical challenges associated with the evaluation function of the Agenda. Furthermore, weak political-will at national levels towards Sustainable Development is another hurdle for the evaluation function of the Agenda. This commentary explores these challenges. It reveals that the existing evaluation mechanisms are not responsive and are inadequate to render the 2030 Agenda inclusive and transformational. To overcome this, the commentary proposes the "Global Enterprise of Local-Knowledge on Development," a collaborative evaluation model for incorporating local knowledge to transform comprehensions and operationalizations of development. For appropriately assessing developmental interventions, the model proposes mandating local educational institutions to continuously engage at grassroots levels to synthesize local reviews on developmental interventions and channel them upwards to national and global levels. The model is characterized by establishing horizontal and bottom-up vertical flows of knowledge in order to evaluate and assess developmental interventions.

Keywords: development, evaluation, global agenda, grassroots, local knowledge, sustainable development goals

1. Introduction

This commentary argues that the existing mechanisms for the evaluation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda are politically driven and are technically challenged in reflecting the real picture of implemented initiatives at the grassroots levels. In addition, the commentary explores the systematic challenges within the field of development that continue to impede the realization of the SDGs by 2030. In addition to creating incoherence within the research-policy nexus, these two categories of challenges intensify the disconnect of the nexus with the grassroots. Subsequently, such incoherence and disconnect, if not addressed, defy the realization of "leaving no one behind," social inclusion, and the transformative premises of the 2030 Agenda.

After explicating these challenges, the paper proposes a new model to follow-up on the effectiveness, appropriateness, sustainability, and relevance of developmental interventions at grassroots levels. Application of the model will not only create coherence between policy and research enterprises, but it will also bridge the chronic disconnect between the comprehensions of development at national and international levels with those within the grassroots contexts.

1.1 Current Implementation Status of the Agenda

The 2030 Agenda has already surpassed almost one third of its 15-year life span. After more than four years of implementation, it has become clear that a change of course in its implementation is necessary, should the realization of its goals and targets be guaranteed. Simply stated, the goals are off-track and the progress towards them is insufficient, with crucial monumental changes remaining (Human Rights Commission [HRC], 2019 & United Nations [UN], 2019). Similarly, recent inquiries in the field suggest more robust efforts in implementing the Agenda (Southern Voice, 2019). In addition to other limitations, the review and follow-up processes of the implemented initiatives are among the main challenges for the successful implementation of the Agenda.

Going back to 2015, one of the characteristics of the Agenda that distinguished it from previous global developmental initiatives was the inclusion of the evaluation function as one of the nine guiding principles of the 'Follow-Up and Review' processes of the Agenda. Aimed at ensuring the successful implementation of the global Agenda (UN, 2015), the inclusion of the evaluation function reflects the increasing demand and consensus among global public policy circles on the importance of knowledge products and data from the grassroots.

Technically, evaluation provides judgment on the relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impacts, and sustainability of developmental interventions (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2016). By this account, the inclusion of the evaluation function as one of the guiding principles of the 'Follow-Up and Review' processes of the Agenda, if successfully applied, can close the existing gaps within the development field between research and policy endeavors. Bridging this gap can subsequently resolve the systematic and chronic disconnect between the research-policy nexus with the realities on the ground regarding the developmental needs and wants of people and communities. Resolving this chronic and persisting disconnect can systematically transform the conceptualization of development and the nature of developmental interventions towards more of an inclusive and interactive approach, where knowledge from grassroots will feed policy initiatives at national and global levels. However, this promise seems illusive and farfetched. While successful implementation of the Agenda requires a robust, inclusive, effective, integrated, and transparent review and follow-up framework (UN, 2015), the inclusion of the evaluation function per se is not the full story, however.

In addition to other systematic factors such as the offshoots of widening inequalities, climate change, and conflicts (Human Development Report [HDR], 2018), the shortfalls of the evaluation and review processes of the Agenda are crucial in inducing setbacks towards its realization. Thus, the need is to look at and scrutinize the challenges, loopholes, and shortfalls of the evaluation function of the 2030 Agenda. However, prior to such discussion it is important to briefly outline the existing evaluation and follow-up mechanisms that are in place within the 2030 Agenda.

1.2 Mechanisms for Implementing the Evaluation Function of the 2030 Agenda

Two types of reviews—a geographic and a thematic—are currently in place to evaluate the progress of the 2030 Agenda. Geographically, member states evaluate their national and subnational progress regarding the implementation of the Agenda through the Volunteer National Reviews (VNRs). The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is the platform for the VNRs. Thematically, the Expert Group meetings evaluate the progress of different thematic areas of the Agenda.

More specifically, the 2030 Agenda mandated the HLPF as the highest-level platform to carry out reviews on the progress of the SDGs and any relevant updates (UN, 2015). The HLPF is composed of high/ministerial level representatives of member states and it is the platform for the Volunteer National Reviews (VNRs) that are, as its name implies, volunteer, state-led and state-driven reviews of the implementation of the SDGs at national and sub-national levels (UN, 2015). In 2019, only 47 countries presented their VNRs at the HLPF meeting (United Nations

Economic and Social Council [UNESC, 2019), while in 2018, there were 44 countries (UNESC, 2018). As previously mentioned, although the VNRs are state-centered/driven, Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) can participate in the panel meetings. The modalities and types of MGoS participation is decided by given member states.

Thematic Reviews (TRs) are periodically conducted by the Expert Group meetings on given SDGs. These meetings are mandated by the General Assembly (UN, 2016) to evaluate the effectiveness of the HLPF. Member States, UN agencies; intergovernmental bodies and forums, academia, and other stakeholders compose the Expert Groups. In 2019, the report of the Expert Group identified two main challenges within the HLPF review and follow-up process of the 2030 Agenda that interfere with the ultimate goal of 'Leaving No One Behind' (LNOB). First, the lack of a rigorous and regulated nature of VNRs, and secondly, the lack of empowering

societies (UN, 2019). This commentary argues that these are not the actual problems, but rather the manifestations of a multitude of problems and challenges that exist within the evaluation function of the 2030 Agenda. These challenges are discussed in detail below.

2. Evaluation Challenges of the 2030 Agenda

The application of evaluation theory to development is responsive to the increasing demand for moral, professional, and technical accountability of both national and international policy circles and practitioners. Evaluation provides judgment on the relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impacts, and sustainability of developmental interventions. The main question, however, is to what extent does the inclusion of the evaluation function serve in the mission of realizing the 2030 Agenda? One part of the answer is found through recognizing and exploring the challenges that impede the evaluation and follow-up processes of the 2030 Agenda.

As the Agenda has already passed one third of its lifespan, it has become evident that the practicality of its evaluation function seems technically challenging and politically sensitive. If such obstacles are not tackled, they will continue to affect the eventual realization of the SDGs. The main technical challenges are: the lack of adequate human and material resources both at national and global levels, the challenged national data infrastructure of many developing countries (underdeveloped data systems), the lack of harmonization of national and international data systems; and issues related to the operationalization and measurement of some goals and targets. These challenges are briefly explored below.

2.1 Technical Capacity

Evaluation is a normative enterprise (Vedung, 1997). At the same time, it is an analytical and technical function that in addition to credibility, requires adequate human and material resources. These capacities—credibility, human capital, and material resources—are inadequate at both international and national levels. Although there are efforts and initiatives aimed at strengthening the evaluation aspect of the SDGs, they remain inadequate and on a modest scale (Yonehara, Saito, Hayashi, Nagao, Yanagisawa, & Matsuyama, 2017).

The inadequacy of technical resources including the challenged credibility for executing the evaluation function is chronic both at national and international levels. The existing figures on the United Nations reveals that the organization is struggling in all three capacities—material, human, and credibility. The assessment of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) indicated that the evaluation function of the UN system is not just understaffed and poorly financed, but it also suffers from challenged credibility (UN, 2012). In the UN system, the ratio of professional evaluators to the overall organizational staff is 0.2 (UN, 2012). Except for a few UN agencies such as UNDP and IFAD that are engaged in evaluating interventions in the field, most of the other UN agencies are engaged in the internal evaluations and process-oriented interventions such as administrative reforms. For example, the evaluation units of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) are staffed with three and four evaluators, respectively (UN, 2012), and are mandated exclusively with internal reviews. In both the cases, the number of evaluators designated for the internal evaluations seems to be adequate. With the 2030 Agenda and its numerous goals and targets and hundreds of indicators across different thematic areas demands a change in the mandate of UN and its agencies regarding evaluation.

As the implementation and evaluation of the 2030 Agenda has been under the direct portfolio of member states, the UN's challenged technical capacity does not seem very relevant. The problem, however, is twofold. First, the lack of evaluation capacity of states automatically mandates the UN to step in and enhance states' evaluation capacities. Second, with the inclusion of new goals and targets in the 2030 Agenda, the mandate for UN and its relevant UN agencies also have increased in terms of facilitating the development of new terminologies, measurements, and operationalizing of protocols for evaluation. As such, the challenged technical capacity of the UN and its agencies are not compatible with the mandate of the global Agenda.

Furthermore, what is missing within the UN system and other intergovernmental organizations is an overarching vision and strategy for the evaluation of developmental policies, programs, projects, and interventions in the field. The 2030 Agenda is universal. Therefore, the evaluation capacity in the field—of states and other stakeholders— needs to be assessed and built. The UN needs to reconsider the evaluation function of itself and its agencies and restructure their evaluation mandates by creating a needs-based balance between internal evaluation and field capacity-building endeavors. With the continuation of the 2030 Agenda, the need is to redistribute the focus and mandate of the evaluation function including the distribution of relevant staff from the core to the periphery.

The current finance and budget allocation to evaluation function of the UN is yet another challenge. The financial limitations are reported both at central and agency-levels of the UN and once again they are incompatible with the needs of the 2030 global Agenda. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) findings reveals that the current allocation of 0.3% of the organizational expenditure to evaluation is inadequate to address the growing demand for coverage, quality and institutional support (Prom-Jackson & Bartsiotas, 2014). In addition, the level of resources allocated to the central evaluation function has not changed significantly over the years in ways that are commensurate with demand. In addition to the limited resources, skewed priority-setting is yet another challenge, as different UN agencies spend most of their allocated budget for an evaluation function on skewed priorities. For example, in 2011 OCHA spent $USD 900,000 (excluding the staff expenses) on nine real-time Inter-Agency Standing Committee Evaluations and internal evaluations (UN, 2012). The limitation of budget allocation is accurate, but at the same time, whatever amount is allocated to the evaluation function of UN agencies has largely been spent on internal evaluations.

A serious technical capacity challenge of the UN is field evaluation, as this can potentially hamper the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Many UN agencies are classified as immature with regard to their technicality in field evaluation. The JIU classified 28 UN agencies into four groups based on the level of maturity regarding their field evaluation function (UN, 2012): (See Note 1)

  a. High Performers: Nine organizations/agencies

  b. Average Performers: Six agencies,

  c. Below Average: Nine agencies, and

  d. Rudimentary: Four agencies having no evaluation function.

This classification depicts that besides wrestling with material limitations, the UN needs to enhance the field evaluation capacity of the majority of its agencies in order to enable them to work with states in relevant thematic areas to functionalize the evaluation and follow-up processes of the 2030 Agenda. An efficient and dynamic evaluation function that will work towards the realization of the Agenda requires a reconsideration of the structural, functional, and budgetary arrangements at both central and decentralized (agency) levels.

This is not to assign the implementation of the SDGs evaluation function to the UN and its agencies, but rather to work with member states to elevate and enhance their evaluation capacity. Acknowledging these limitations and challenges of the existing technical evaluation capacity, the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) stressed on enhancing both national and UN joint and system-wide evaluation capacities (Bester, 2015).

2.2 Underdeveloped Data Systems

In the age of big data, the claim of underdeveloped data systems seems speculative. There is plenty of data, indeed. The question, however, is to what extent does the existing data project the real picture of development on the ground? Distorting and overlooking the realities at grassroots levels has remained a chronic and systematic problem within the field of development. This distortion is not due to the lack of data per se, but rather because of the existing gaps in the data systems. Development along with security and the environment are the three fields of global public policy that are suffering from data gaps (Coicaud & Tahri, 2014), caused by procedural and methodological shortcomings. Three types of shortcomings are challenging the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

First, the inadequacy of data related to non-Development Assistance Committee (non-DAC) countries. The 2030 Agenda promotes and relies on South-South cooperation. Accordingly, based on various reasons—humanitarian, cultural, geo-strategic, or broad regional interests—emerging economies in the South have been involved in developmental initiatives in other Southern countries. Up until recently, the data showing the flow of South-South developmental aid was almost entirely absent and not compiled. However, in recent years there are some initiatives of non-DAC aid data compilation aimed at filling this huge gap. In 2017, AidData published development aid data from non-ODC (other developing countries) countries including China and Brazil (Sethi, Custer, Turner, Sims, DiLorenzo, & Latourell, 2017). The non-ODC data is still in its infancy, unregulated, unsynchronized and not comparable. Furthermore, this system still needs robust check and verification mechanisms for reliability purposes. The lack of enough non-ODC data and methodological and procedural shortcomings of the existing initiatives undermine efforts to measure the effectiveness of initiatives under regional and South-South cooperation. This subsequently affects the 'Follow-Up and Review' processes of the 2030 Agenda.

The second challenge is the critical gaps in the existing qualitative data. While many goals and targets have a qualitative nature, the lack of qualitative data is a crucial missing link for a comprehensive evaluation. One of

the main functions of evaluation is to measure the appropriateness of a given developmental intervention. However, without enough data, such processes become very problematic, if not impossible, to carry out.

Appropriateness refers to 'the right thing to do' in a given situation and it scrutinizes the relevance and compatibility between the objectives of an intervention and the actual needs and wants on the ground. At grassroots, the definition of certain needs and wants may not be compatible with the standardized measures of quantifiable variables. Poverty, peace, equality, inclusion, and many other notions within the 2030 Agenda have strong qualitative and relative aspects. As such, measuring the appropriateness of developmental interventions related to these notions as well as many more goals and targets, besides quantifiable data, needs qualitative operationalization and measures. More specifically, the lack of qualitative data narrows down evaluation processes to merely quantitative measures that are exclusively aggregate in nature. This is problematic as aggregate measures distort and/or overlook realities on the ground.

The third gap within the data systems in the development field is the incompatibility between the national data systems of many developing countries and the well-established and developed international data infrastructures. Normally, national level data of developing countries goes through intensive and time-consuming harmonization and standardization processes before the data is used for analysis and comparison at the international level.

The new global Agenda, however, focuses on national and sub-national level data. This means that the 'Follow-Up and Review' process should be based on country-led evaluations and data, which should be high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, geographic location, and other characteristics relevant to national contexts. In the contemporary context, the data infrastructures of the majority of developing countries are lacking these attributes and any effort to upgrade such data systems would require tremendous amounts of time and resources. In the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs recommended that the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs Agenda requires upgrading national statistical systems (Bester, 2015). This is a major step that is required and must be facilitated by international organizations, mainly the UN. However, as stated previously, upgrading these data systems will demand an overwhelming amount of time and resources. This is an existential threat for the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

2.3 Political Sensitivities

Data, development, and evaluation have undeniable political aspects and implications. The nature of developmental aid, aggregation in measurements; the country-led country- owned (state-centric) approach of the Agenda, and the evaluation itself, are all different aspects of the 2030 Agenda that are attached to political sensitivities.

By keeping the multi-polarity of the contemporary world's political landscape in mind, it can be argued that aid and developmental interventions have become even more politicized. Under regional and South-South cooperation, the level of politicization is becoming even more serious. As such, developmental interventions and aid of strong Southern economies is not easily accessible for evaluation and follow-up processes. In fact, developmental aid has always remained under the auspice of the donor country's foreign policy and therefore is an area left entirely untouched by systematic evaluation (Vedung, 1997).

The arbitrary nature of many of the goals and targets also increase the political sensitivities of the 2030 Agenda. National governments take credit for improved national averages, while international organizations claim success and progress by reporting both improved national averages and crude figures about global attainments. Within this aggregation, sophisticated/critical, granular, and rigorous analyses lose ground.

The 2030 Agenda has many of such arbitrary goals and targets. For example, the first goal of envisioning the eradication of extreme poverty by 2030. Technically, extreme poverty is defined as living on less than $1.90 per day—the internationally agreed upon poverty line (the World Bank, 2016). In the global context, this operationalization lacks sophisticated comprehension about poverty, its nature, and how to alleviate it. Does living slightly above this value— say two dollars a day— equate to the lack of extreme poverty? Shall governments feel complacent if the extremely poor proportion of their population start living slightly above this threshold? On one hand, such arbitration and aggregation overshadow and throw the dire situation of marginalized geographic pockets and communities into the blind-spot. On the other hand, focusing on aggregate indicators provides convenience and political compliance to governments by diverting their attention to allocate resources to easily transforming situations, or invest in the most accessible communities and locations. At stake is the welfare, progress, and development of the underprivileged, the poorest, and the most vulnerable.

These measures deprive the deprived. These "have-nots" are losing both their existence and their voices by being tossed and diluted in the whirlpool of aggregate data going through national systems into international datasets. For example, the final MDG report depicts that globally, the number of people living in extreme poverty has declined by more than half—falling from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 836 million in 2015 (UN, 2015). What this celebrated and encouraging progress ignored is the rising trend of income inequality at global, regional, and national levels. Measuring growth and poverty, developmental indicators consider national averages. However, these indicators do not consider the accumulation of national incomes into the hands of very specific and narrow tiers of a given society. In 2007, 70% of the total global income was enjoyed by the top 20% of the population, while the bottom quartile had access to only 2% of the total income (Ortiz & Cummins, 2011). More discouraging is the prospect for the future. While the post-MDGs Agenda envisions the eradication of extreme poverty for all people everywhere by 2030, with the current trend of change in income inequality, it will take more than 800 years for the bottom billion to achieve ten percent of the global income (Ortiz & Cummins, 2011).

The country-led country-owned orientation of the 2030 Agenda is yet another political challenge for effective evaluation. The paradox is that the democratization of national political systems simultaneously enhances the politicization of the implementation of the Agenda and its evaluation. As the Agenda envisions country-led and country-owned processes of both development and its evaluation, it becomes more challenging to independently and objectively evaluate national developmental policies and programs. Expecting robust and reliable evaluation by the states of their developmental intervention is over optimistic, if not naïve. The superficial work of the states already surfaced. The Expert Group indicated that the Volunteer Country Reviews lacks analytical rigor and regulation (UN, 2019). Both lack of capacity as well as lack of political-will may have contributed to these challenges.

2.4 Conceptualizing the New Goals and Targets

The introduction of new goals and targets is another challenged area of the 2030 Agenda in terms of effective measurements and evaluation. Consensus and institutionalization are the two aspects of the new goals and targets that will continue to hamper the successful implementation of the Agenda. Moreover, the Agenda has developed international consensus on the importance of these goals and targets to be reached by 2030. The problem, however, is the prospect for developing consensus (political and technical) at national and international levels to construct terminologies and to operationalize these concepts and notions that for the first time, have entered the global development matrix.

Equally important is the creation of national and universal institutional arrangements for policy deliberations and the implementation of the new goals and targets. This itself is a major hurdle for the Agenda. For example, operationalizing, measuring, and institutionalizing Goal 16 and its related targets is accompanied by technical and political challenges. Ultimately, the goal is aimed at promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels (UN, 2015). Political sensitivities, along with methodological limitations, are a major obstacle for operationalizing and measuring peace. In addition, inclusiveness and transparency of national institutions for policy deliberation and measuring implementations are equally big hurdles.

To measure this goal, the UN has identified homicide per 100,000 population and the Corruption Perception Index as the two illustrative indicators for a quick assessment of a country or region's starting position regarding Goal 16 (Jandl, 2017). Measuring peace through the number of homicide cases in a country is directly measuring the effectiveness of domestic security infrastructure. However, most governments, if not all, are unwilling to provide information or to make efforts to generate data that could potentially question the effectiveness of the most sensitive national institutions—law enforcement and security. This is the issue of sovereignty (largely for developing countries). As such, indicators related to the rule of law, corruption, human rights, security, detention/killing of journalists, etc. are highly politically sensitive to be objectively and rigorously evaluated.

Besides political sensitivities, some of the newly introduced targets and indicators are bound by severe methodological challenges. The characteristics that increase such methodological challenges for measurement and evaluation include: multi-dimensionality, strong subjective aspects, lack of agreed definitions, and context-specificity. For example, peace in a region engulfed by armed conflict may have a different meaning than peace in a marginalized and vulnerable urban geographic pocket in a developed country. Hence, the real test for these newly introduced goals and targets is in the field. Creating initial consensus among the involved stakeholders in terms of included these into the global agenda should not induce complacent both for international institutions and states. The real test seems to be much burdensome and hence overwhelming.

In addition to the specific challenges of the 2030 Agenda mentioned above, there are systematic problems within the field of development that will continue to off-track the realization of the SDGs. These challenges are briefly described below.

3. Systematic Challenges of Development

With the emergence of the 'big data' enterprise within the corporate world, the development field has adopted the dynamism of facilitating a 'data revolution.' This is promising adaptation but with a misleading comprehension. The problem in the development field is not merely the lack of data, but rather the nature of the existing data, which is deprived of the ability to project the real picture from the grassroots. This problem is induced by the disconnect between the research-policy nexus with the realities on the ground. It is a chronic issue with both the accuracy and precision of the existing data. Its accuracy is compromised as there is always a lack of compatibility between what is measured and what is ought to and thought to be measured. From complicated and subjective concepts such as poverty, peace, and inclusion to the basic concepts of income, employment, and others, the measurements are continuously based on operationalizations that are not compatible with comprehensions of the given notions at the grassroots. As a result, processes of development have become alienated from many people and communities at the broader bottom of the pyramid. The challenges with the precision of the existing data is yet another chronic shortfall of development; the aggregation of the data.

While aggregation is common and is an internationally accepted practice necessary for the purposes of objectivity and reliability, as well as a required method for analytical and policy deliberations, this process distorts and disfigures realities on the ground. The data that channels from national levels should be compatible across the board with internationally accepted and over-arching technical conditions, definitions, and measurements. However, the distortion of reality occurs at two levels.

First, at the national level by states; overlooking the diverse realties on the ground, and secondly at the international level by relevant international organizations through standardization and synchronization. Within these processes, the two questions that have rarely undergone critical scrutiny are the following: What is standard? And, how to synchronize countless realities at the grassroots into one representative picture without distorting them? These are the fundamental questions that more than any type of technical, procedural, or bureaucratic response, require moral obligations towards the people and communities in order to be answered. Unfortunately, the development field has persistently failed in acknowledging and responding to this moral obligation.

For over seventy years, development has become a one-size-fits-all concept and practice. Governments of developing countries with high technical, financial, and aid dependencies on the international industry of development have been importing and imposing untested concepts and development models onto their people. This deterministic imposition has been stripping people from their resources, traditional knowledge, livelihoods, and identities/cultures. Their traditional/indigenous knowledge has been scrapped by the imported modern (aka) universal knowledge of development. Moreover, to evaluate the effectiveness of implemented initiatives, the data should be comparable across the board. Realities on the ground should be framed in order to fit within the one-size-fits-all prescription. Unfortunately, the mechanisms for evaluating and following up on the implementation of the SDGs is not much different from this sustained tradition of imposing sample prescriptions of the narrowly defined development. Although the implementation and assessment of previous developmental interventions at the grassroots were facilitated under the auspices of international and global sources, the situation for the SDGs is not much different. Now, the state, with all its disintegrated sectoral and departmental bureaucracies, is identified as the middle entity responsible for implementing the global sample prescriptions for local needs and wants.

Furthermore, the realization of the SDGs Agenda cannot be reliably measured by the distorted outlook of the grassroots through aggregating the data. On one hand, the disintegrated approaches at national levels to development and its evaluation has been one of the main hurdles as sectoral and disciplinary divisions present a fragmented picture. On the other hand, whitewashing the entire picture based on internationally constructed and accepted methodological and procedural cascading is equally problematic and misleading. Unfortunately, the technological advances and the methodological approaches that such advances have facilitated, including crowdsourcing and connectivity, has been utilized only to facilitate, maintain, and accelerate both the disintegration and whitewashing processes of information from the grassroots.

These advancements are not used to channel and present the actual picture from the bottom (grassroots level). Communicating data in this manner can respond to the much debated but least resolved existential threat of the time; the inequalities not just among countries but within countries. Effective communication of data can help to assess inequalities within countries. It informs responsive decision-making and resource allocation at all levels

and provides the transparency that is necessary to hold governments accountable for progress (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives [ICLEI], 2015). Ignoring this need is a major contradiction of the SDGs Agenda.
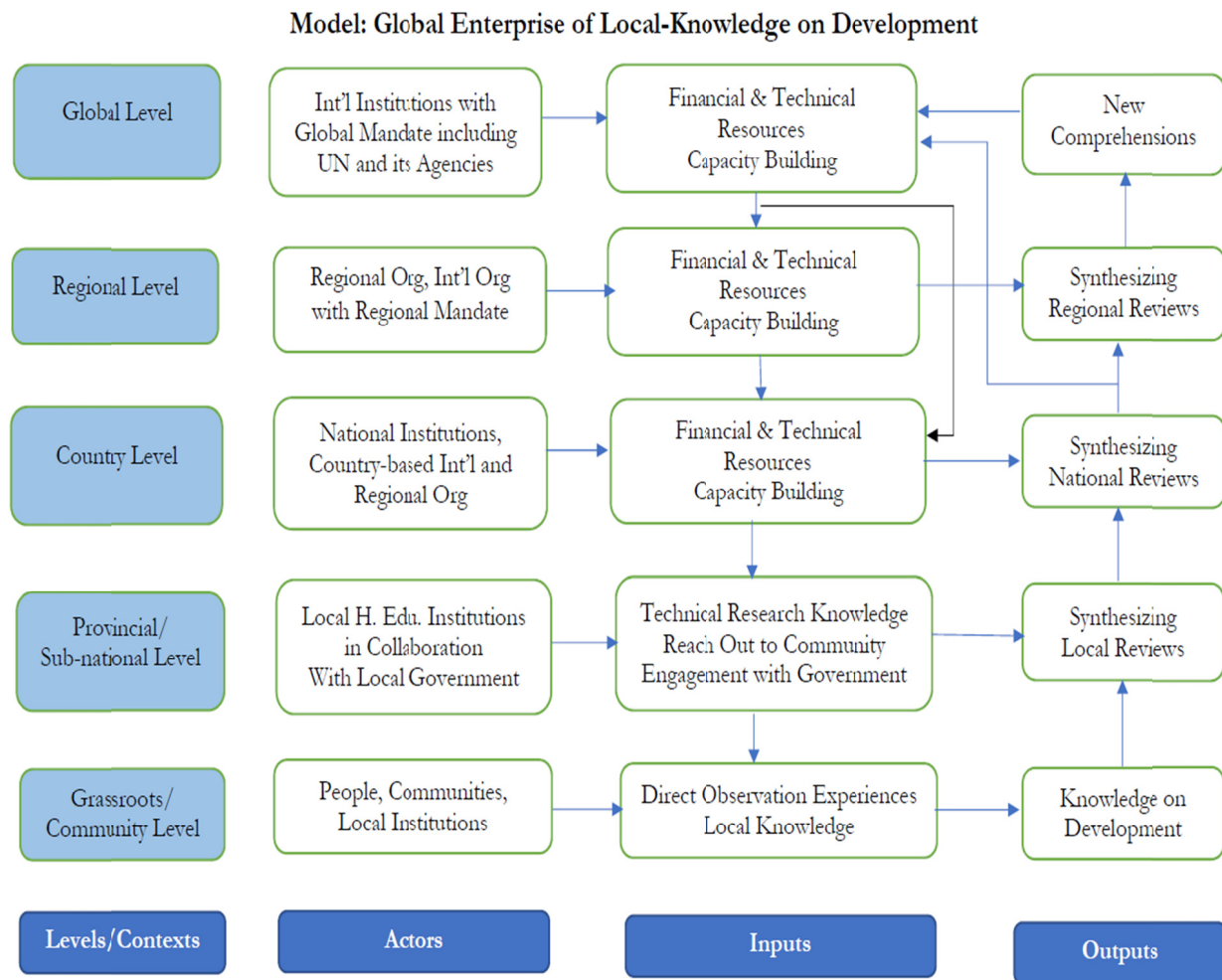
The contradiction is that the Agenda is said to be socially inclusive, transformative, and that most fundamentally, the vision of the Agenda is "leaving no one behind." With that said, such a vision is aimed at including people at the grassroots in decision-making, implementation and evaluation processes. This will subsequently facilitate changes from the local/grassroots level and eventually will cause a shift in the development paradigm—a transformation. Practically, however, states are commissioned or designated to implement and evaluate. This represents a strict top-down, prescriptive, and a "business as usual" approach of a sample prescription, unlike the mentioned premises of the Agenda itself.

The universality of the SDGs should not undermine variations in the developmental status of different people and communities by oversimplifying and distorting these variations as national averages and measures. Snapshotting national realities only serves arbitrary goals and aggregate measures. This aggregate outlook to development is conflicting to the realization of the Agenda's premise of "leaving no one behind." On the contrary, it facilitates obscuring and unseeing those that have remained lagging behind. The country-driven/led approach to the implementation and follow-up of the Agenda, in addition to requiring inclusive approaches and the introduction of new tools and instruments for evaluation, needs a bottom-up approach for evaluation. This will ensure that the actual face of development and developmental issues at the grassroots are reflected and represented.

The proposed social inclusion approach of the Agenda defies the customary top-down approach both to the implementation and evaluation of developmental initiatives. Social inclusion requires the ownership and involvement of communities at grassroots in all stages of intervention. Such bottom-up mechanisms are not compatible with the existing approaches and methods of evaluation. Communities at grassroots need to evaluate the relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, and sustainability of implemented initiatives.

Technically, the suggestion of bottom-up approaches for evaluation is associated with the typical concern of "lack of technical capacity" in the field. Such a concern is a myth and at the core of this concern is the complete disregard of the proponents of universal/modern knowledge to local knowledge and comprehensions. Since the inception of the development industry in the early 1950s, its universal draftsmen and its national clients have been advocates for completely scrapping traditional and customary knowledge should societies embark on the journey of development (UN, 1951). This is a systematic bias of the development field towards the capabilities and abilities of people and communities that are embedded in their respective local knowledge.

With regard to development and its implementation, there is knowledge, sources of knowledge, and even organizations to evaluate its different aspects at the grassroots level. To evaluating the 2030 Agenda, there may be different pathways to operationalize grassroots knowledge and its sources and organizations. One approach is to establish a "Global Enterprise of Local-Knowledge on Development" for assessing the relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, and sustainability of developmental interventions; and eventually to contribute to the needed shift in conceptualizing development, its implementation, and measurement.

Model: Global Enterprise of Local-Knowledge on Development

4. Global Enterprise of Local-Knowledge on Development: A Model for Inclusion and Transformation

4.1 Epistemological Debate

In the age of big data, granular data plays an increasingly crucial role in the overall societal worldview and outlook. The field of development, however, has largely remained within the conventional conduct of aggregation, thereby distorting local realities in the mis-leading and blurred presentation of national overviews. Such approach has failed to present the factual picture of development at the expansive and widespread bottom. Aggregation has continued to deny the existence of various facts and realities on the ground that cannot be represented by national overviews.

Furthermore, there is another epistemological problem with the mainstream measurements of development. These measures construct the aggregated snapshots by applying specific definitions, processes, and approaches at the grassroots that have different comprehensions on development and apply different processes for the identification of their developmental needs and wants. These disparities at global and local levels intervene in the how being/quality of the produced knowledge through the interactions and dynamics of the two interfaces.

Regarding the mainstream knowledge production on development at the grassroots, the contexts and preconditions deemed necessary for producing objective and verifiable knowledge include: disciplinary premises, paradigmatic conceptualizations, methodological applications, practical limitations, and analytical levels. On the other hand, there are local contexts and preconditions for observing, assessing, and eventually comprehending development and developmental interventions. Here is where the interaction of the interfaces occurs. The problem with the field of development is that while ensuring the application of the required contexts and preconditions including methodological requirements are strictly followed, studying the impacts of interfaces on the interactions of actors, institutions, and processes, eventually on the produced knowledge is ignored.

Ultimately, the concern for interfaces is to explore the ways in which different, possibly conflicting, knowledge systems interact (Arce & Long, 1987). This exploration is lacking within the field of development. This is despite the fact that the development field constructed the strong universal-local knowledge dichotomy. Within this dichotomy, local knowledge is useful only if it is for utilitarian purposes (Escobar, 1995).

Two factual claims cannot be ignored. First, the existence of local or indigenous knowledge (Howes & Chambers, 1979; Rhoades & Booth 1982). Secondly, that the dichotomy of local and universal knowledge not only exists, but within the field of development there has been a domination-repression relationship between these two paradigms of knowledge. Furthermore, based on the nature of knowledge, this dichotomy cannot be denied or overlooked. Knowledge, as it is constituted by the societal group, has a social dynamic to it. The group categorizes, codes, processes, and imputes meaning to their experiences through a complex process involving a number of social, situational, cultural and institutional factors (Arce & Long, 1987; Sillitoe, 2006). Different communities and people with specific socializations and social contexts impute different meanings to information. Therefore, local knowledge [unlike modern scientific knowledge] has entirely different mode of operations and relations to social and cultural fields (Guattari, 1987). Hence, based on their specific cultural and social backgrounds, people see and view development fundamentally different (Gasper, 2004). On the other hand, people with a more scientific orientation or those socialized within different disciplines look at the same information, but through different lenses.

In the development field, however, unlike the societal construction of knowledge, a narrow and oversimplified (largely positivist orientation) has dominated the conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement of development and its different paradigms. This orientation has continuously failed in addressing the needs and wants of people at grassroots levels. In addition, such an outlook of development has created significant disparities that have subsequently caused and sustained underdevelopments and unfreedoms among different geographic pockets and social groups across the globe. To change this course, the need is to reconceptualize development by letting people and communities to initially assess the relevance, appropriateness, and effectiveness of developmental interventions and ultimately assign meaning to those interventions aimed at addressing their wants and needs.

It should be acknowledged that within the developmental field, it is not only the weak link among the research-policy nexus, but that this nexus is simultaneously disconnected with the grassroots. To bridge the gap between the nexus and the people, to break the top-down pattern of developmental interventions/imposition, and to overcome the political and technical challenges of the review and follow-up processes, innovative and new approaches must lead the way.

One approach that can tackle and cope with these challenges is a bottom-up approach of generating knowledge on the implementation, relevance, appropriateness, and effectiveness of developmental interventions. This commentary proposes "The Global Enterprise of Local-Knowledge on Development" to facilitate strengthening the research-policy nexus and most importantly, to connect the nexus with the grassroots—people and communities. This is an evaluation model for review and follow-up processes of developmental interventions.

The need to establish this model is not influenced by any type of cultural thesis suggesting the exogenous nature of local understandings, values, and norms to development. On the contrary, the logic behind this model is the existence of different experiences—what Arce and Long call 'life-worlds'— at local and universal levels regarding coding, processing and attributing meaning to evidence and observations regarding development.

The establishment of a local knowledge enterprise has the potential to channel knowledge on the relevance, appropriateness, and effectiveness of developmental interventions from grassroots upward to policy and decision-making circles at national and global levels. It is neither the conventional method to randomize or survey cross-sectional snapshots at local levels and measure them against goals and targets constructed and operationalized globally. Nor is this a long-term and hence expensive experimental or quasi-experimental intervention in a group of selected people to observe the outcome. This model proposes continuous synthesis of local reviews regarding the developmental needs and wants of people; assessing the nature and effectiveness of developmental interventions by local institutions. Subsequently, these local reviews will be channeled to national and global levels.

4.2 Vision

The model is based on the vision of including everyone in the developmental process by enabling people and communities to be the agents of their own development. To let people and communities identify their needs and wants; and assess the relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, and sustainability of developmental interventions through their continuous engagement with data collection, generating, and channeling practices.

4.3 Rationale

The knowledge systems of people and communities evolve with changes in environmental, social, economic and other spheres. In the age of the Anthropocene, the ecological changes that subsequently induce disruptions and destructions in all spheres of life are more rapid, unexpected, and come with local specificity. These characteristics of the current ecological age makes local knowledge and 'know-hows' more crucial and qualified in coping with the consequences of these changes. Saving nature demands the valuation of local knowledge of sustaining nature (Escobar, 1995). In addition, local knowledge is becoming more crucial in responding to the developmental challenges of communities and in assessing the relevance, effectiveness, and appropriateness of developmental interventions.

The transformation claim of the 2030 Agenda cannot be rationalized and realized without changing the overall nature and course of the development enterprise. Its failures over the course of the last seventy plus years in fulfilling its promised prosperity and welfare points out the need to change the course of development and its interventions. Furthermore, it can be argued that if knowledge is culturally conditioned and that it is not locally homogeneous (Blaikie et al., 1996), then how can the local relevance, appropriateness, and effectiveness of developmental interventions be measured and assessed based on indicators and benchmarks that are constructed in contexts that are distant and disconnected from local realities and understandings? Only knowledge from grassroots can better understand the local needs and wants of people and communities. This need has been echoed and recognized for reconceptualizing development (See World Commission on Culture and Development [WCCD], 1995).

4.4 Assumptions

The model is based on three assumptions. First, in the age of the Anthropocene, which is characterized by unexpected ecological changes with local variations, local knowledge as human capital is more equipped to evaluate the relevance, appropriateness, and effectiveness of developmental interventions including investments aimed at enhancing the survival and resilience capacity of the people and communities.

Secondly, the model assumes that local knowledge is based on observations and is evidence-based. Unlike scientific knowledge that in most cases relies on experimental or quasi experimental manipulation, local comprehensions require real life observations to establish and infer patterns. Hence, observations are the common denominator for both of these knowledge paradigms. Any distinctions made between modern knowledge and local knowledge in terms of accuracy and precision is biased and interest-driven. The black/white dichotomy between scientific and local knowledge put forth by developmental practitioners not only serves their own interests and paradigms, but it also induces major implications for their developmental interventions (Blaikie, et al., 1996).

The third assumption is that bridging the disconnect between the research-policy nexus with the grassroots and informing the nexus via local knowledge is not a populist approach to inquiry. The paradigm of local knowledge is not sentiment or myth-driven. It, on the contrary evolves in a complex context that is shaped by specific cultural, environmental, ecological, political, social, and economic factors of the given community. Local knowledge comes from a range of sources and is a dynamic mix of past "tradition" and present "invention" with a view to the future (Sillitoe 2006).

4.5 Moral Ground

Throughout the history of developmental discourse, local knowledge has either been rejected, appropriated, or ventriloquized (Blaikie et al. 1996). Different development paradigms regarded local knowledge as backwards, irrelevant, and even a challenge for modernization (development). These paradigmatic interfaces with local knowledge have moral implications as well as other consequences.

In addition to the failures of these paradigms in realizing their claims, they have consistently excluded people and communities in the overall processes of developmental interventions. On top of that, these paradigms have rendered the entire practice of development as a never-ending experiment by considering people and communities as "subjects" rather than human beings. Placing people and communities as the subject of different experiments/interventions is indeed the immoral face of the developmental enterprise. This points out to the postmodernist assertion that the goal of development rather than improvement is control and domination of people (Rapley, 2007). This is based on the over-arching assumption of the incapability of underdeveloped/poor people. People and communities at the grassroots are not and should not be considered the subject of development or developmental interventions. To avert this immoral assumption and practice, the need is to hold people and communities as key actors, the equivalent to all of the other actors involved in a developmental

initiative including the practitioners, policy-makers, researchers, and others. By including people and communities in all stages of development and developmental interventions, this practice/conduct gives the opportunity back to the people and communities to exert their agency.

4.6 Significance

The significance of applying local knowledge in evaluating developmental interventions is that it will assess the relevance, appropriateness, and effectiveness through a lens that has local focus and prospect. Furthermore, in the age of the Anthropocene, we have been learning that the anthropocentric modern/technical knowledge not only was unable to solve problems, but further facilitated a downhill journey for the planet towards unprecedented issues, challenges, and threats. Discarding and ignoring the local 'know-hows' and traditional knowledge has been a bovine comprehension towards the people and planet since the beginning of the modern world. In addition to other ills such as colonization, imperialism, and neo-colonialism, the anthropocentric understanding of the world facilitated by modern knowledge, induced the age of the Anthropocene by enabling humanity to go beyond their needs and wants towards satisfying their cumulative greed. The Sustainable Development era gives us an opportunity to reconsider our over-arching assumptions, comprehensions, and outlooks towards development, the people, and the planet. One such approach is to let people at grassroots levels assess and evaluate the relevance, appropriateness, and effectiveness of the goals and targets of developmental interventions. In principle, a tiny technocratic and bureaucratic collection of experts cannot make decisions for over 7 billion people, their communities, and the planet. Let these people be heard and to feed the future outlook of development. How? By bringing local knowledge up to national and universal stages.

4.7 Approach

This model suggests a grassroots bottom-up collaborative approach for evaluating developmental interventions. All actors and stakeholders are classified into five spatial levels/contexts of:

    A.   Grassroots/community,

    B.   Provincial/sub-national,

    C.   Country level,

    D.   Regional level, and

    E.   Global level.

At each level, actors contribute specifically to the evaluation process that is composed of two different processes/flows of inputs and outputs. The 'input' flow is top-down, meaning from global to grassroots, while the 'output' flow is bottom-up, from grassroots upwards to global.

Within both processes, actors at the provincial/sub-national level are those who transform inputs and outputs into tangible products. For example, within the inputs flow, financial and technical inputs such as technical knowledge flowing from global, regional, and national levels converts to tangible inputs of knowledge collecting instruments and of reaching out/engaging with people and communities. Similarly, within the output flow, once again actors at sub-national levels transform the output from grassroots—local knowledge—into tangible knowledge products by synthesizing local reviews.

As the actors at provincial/sub-national levels are crucial for transforming both inputs and outputs into tangible products and intermingling local and modern knowledge, these actors must have both local and technical orientations and socializations.

Local higher education institutions are technically and spatially in a suitable place to establish the connection between local and technical knowledge on development. These institutions are temporally and spatially in efficiently accessible positions to channel local knowledge to national and global levels. At grassroots levels, these institutions (largely universities) have the technical means and tools; spatial relevance, and local legitimacy to collect data and synthesize reviews on development and developmental interventions.

The argument against local and regional educational institutions can be that these are silos of scientific educational centers with modern orientations with regard to generating and sharing knowledge. As such, how can they be relevant in accumulating and channeling local knowledge? The answer is embedded in the nature of local knowledge. Unlike common/conventional understandings, local knowledge is not necessarily and exclusively customary and static. On the contrary, local 'know-hows' and knowledge is dynamic and has been evolving through both formal and informal processes and sources. While modernity and modern knowledge on development has gained dominance by discarding and disregarding traditional and indigenous comprehensions, local knowledge has always remained dynamic and adaptive in addressing given challenges. This knowledge

does not exist in a vacuum but rather is adaptive to the requirements of the realities on the ground. Therefore, the nature of local knowledge, as a paradigm not alienated from technical orientation, provides local educational institutions the ability to harvest and share this type of knowledge on development.

It is important to note that while inputs from global and regional sources in terms of financial, technical, and capacity-building are periodic in this model, the engagement of local communities and people with developmental initiatives and their evaluation is continuous. This continuity is realized by the engagement of provincial educational institutions with community and developmental interventions through their normal scholastic and research endeavors.

In other words, this model internalizes both development and developmental interventions within the scholastic and academic activities of these institutions. Furthermore, the persistent engagement of people and communities with their respective provincial and local educational institutions will reconcile the technical and local paradigms of knowledge, which will ultimately transform comprehensions of development, as well as its operationalization and measurement. This is where a paradigm shift will occur; not by knowledge elites, but by the inclusion of the vast bottom of the pyramid.

5. Conclusion

The existing challenges—technical, political, and systematic—stand in the way of realizing the 2030 Agenda. Specifically, at stake are the premises of "leaving no one behind," "social inclusion," and "transformation." These three premises, more than being rhetorical, indicate fundamental and persistent flaws within the field of development.

"Leaving no one behind" is a vision that cannot be realized merely by expanding the coverage, accessibility, and availability of given resources and services. Its realization requires a comprehensive inclusion of the grassroots—everyone, including those that are off the grid of developmental interventions either due to physical constrains or political, social, economic, environmental, or other hurdles—in the formulation, implementation, and follow-up of the developmental Agenda. The main question regarding the premise of "leaving no one behind" is: how will we know who is left behind?

The chronic problem within the field of development is that aggregating the picture of development has always unseen and overshadowed those left behind. This pattern will continue unless the global community incorporates an approach to inquiry that projects the actual portraits at the grassroots. This in turn requires ensuring "social inclusion," yet another premise of the Agenda.

Social inclusion of the Agenda is a bold vision. It has political, logistical, and methodological aspects including the lack of comparative data, the need for more representative data, and developing new methodologies for data collection and analysis (Bamberger, et al., 2015). The inclusion of such premise in the Agenda actually reflects another systematic malpractice of exclusion that has dominated the field of development since its inception. Development, largely for the Southern countries, has remained an enterprise of "siloed thinking." As a concept it has always been imported, and as a practice it has always remained strictly a top-down approach that has been imposed with unbearable costs. These processes have excluded people and communities from conceptualizing, measuring, implementing, and evaluating development and its different initiatives. The 2030 Agenda has been following the same 'business as usual approach,' and unless there is a shift towards approaching and including people and communities at the grassroots to be hold as equal actors, this destructive pattern will continue.

Thirdly, the 2030 Agenda is envisioned to be transformative. The development industry and its various paradigms has remained a one-way, top-down, and a 'one-size-fits-all' endeavor. This has caused a huge disconnect between the constructed measures and notions of development with realities on the ground. The gap has subsequently facilitated a systematic problem of development; its consistent failure in realizing claims of prosperity and welfare. The need is for a transformation both in the comprehension of development—a paradigm shift— as well as a transformation towards enabling people and communities to be the agent of their own in identifying their developmental wants and needs.

To fulfill the three premises of the global Agenda, the primary need is to liberate the evaluation of the implemented developmental initiative, if not policy deliberations and decision-making at initial stage, from the interest-based and -driven circles including the policy networks, interest groups, and issues networks. At the same time, these formulations and outputs should also be liberated from the hold of empirical authoritarianism including the epistemic communities at global and national levels. Let local knowledge enterprise from the bottom assess the relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, and sustainability of implemented development initiatives. Subsequently, through channeling local knowledge to the upper contexts/levels by synthesizing local

and national reviews, this paradigm of knowledge will feed deliberations, formulations, and policy making at the top level.

Methodologically, to realize these changes, data for evaluating developmental interventions should have both range for representation as well as depth for generating descriptions and comprehensions. This ensures granular connections, both horizontal and vertical, with the grassroots. The proposed model suggests such an approach that will systematically incorporate local knowledge into knowledge production on development, and policy formulation and deliberations by utilizing vertical and horizontal flows for bridging the wide gap and incompatibility between the universal and local comprehensions on development and its implementation.

The model for evaluation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda is proposed in order to systematically transform the nature and flow of future developmental interventions. This model, while acknowledging the importance of bringing down the driver-seat and leadership of the global Agenda from the systemic (international) level to the unit (state) level, argues that it will not help in bringing the enterprise of development from its predominant characteristics of elitism and top-down orientations.

The continuous failure of developmental interventions, either classic, neo-liberal, or neo-populist, needs to be acknowledged and subsequently such interventions need to take a U-turn. Both these necessities—acknowledging the failures and reversing the course of development interventions— require having the actual understanding of development at grassroots levels free from the distortion of aggregation and other interfaces including disciplinary, methodological, analytical, and practical.

In sum, in the age of ever-increasing technological revolution and big data, if corporations are able to bank, store, and utilize immeasurable amounts of data on customers, what are the challenges that prevent the global enterprise of development from upstreaming and utilizing the "real face" of developmental interventions and their relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness, and sustainability from the grassroots? There may not exist any challenges per se, but rather the lack of political-will. As such, this is preventing the transformation of development from an elitist-led orientation to that of an enterprise conceptualized, measured, and hence, owned by local people and communities at grassroots levels. The "Global Enterprise of Local-Knowledge on Development" is a model that envisions such a transformation.

References

Alberto Arce, A & Long, N. (1987). The Dynamics of knowledge interfaces between Mexican agricultural bureaucrats and peasants: A Case study from Jalisco. *Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe, 43(Diciembre de 1987)*, 5-30.

Bamberger, M., Segone, M., & Tateossian, F. (2015). *Evaluating the Sustainable Development Goals with a "No one left behind" lens through equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluations*. Eval Partners. Retrieved from www.evalpartners.org/selected-books.

Bester, A. (2015). *2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review – Study on Capacity Development*. United Nations. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/qcpr/pdf/sgr2016-deskreview-capdev.pdf

Blaikie, P., Brown, K., Stocking, M., Tang, L., Dixon, P., & Sillitoe, D. (1997). Knowledge in action: Local knowledge as a development resource and barriers to its incorporation in natural resource research and development. *Agricultural Systems, 55*(2). 217-237. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0308-521X(97)00008-5

Coicaud, J., & Tahri, I. (2014). Nationally based data: Challenges for global governance (and global policy). *Global Policy, 5*(2), 135-145. https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12118

Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development: The making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press. Princeton, New Jersey.

Gasper, D. (2004). *The Ethics of development*. Edinburgh University Press. Edinburgh.

Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand plateaus*. University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis.

Howes, M., & Chambers, R. (1979). Indigenous Technical Knowledge: Analysis Implications and Issues. *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin, 10*(2), 5–11. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.1979.mp10002002.x

Human Rights Commission. (2019). *Summary of the intersessional meeting for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*. Geneva, Denmark. A/HRC/40/34. Retrieved from https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SDGS/Pages/HRCIntersessionalMeeting.aspx

International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). (2015). Measuring, Monitoring and Evaluating the SDGs. *ICLEI Briefing Sheet- Urban Issues*, No. 06. Bonn. Retrieved from https://www.localizingthesdgs.org/library/236/ICLEI-SDGs-Briefing-Sheets-06-Measuring-Monitoring-and -Evaluating-the-SDGs.pdf

Jandl, M. (2017). *Towards the monitoring of Goal 16 of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A study of the selection, rationale and validity of indicators with suggestions for further improvements*. United Nations Sabbatical Leave Research Report. Retrieved from https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/editors/u604/Towards%20the%20monitoring%20of%20Goal%2016% 20of%20ther%20SDG.pdf

Ortiz, I., & Cummins, M. (2011). Global Inequality: Beyond the Bottom Billion – A Rapid Review of Income Distribution in 141 Countries. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.

Prom-Jackson, S., & Bartsiotas, G. A. (2014). *Analysis of the Evaluation Function in the United Nations System*. Joint Inspection Unit. JIU/REP/2014/6. New York, NY. Retrieved from https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu_document_files/products/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Prod ucts/JIU_REP_2014_6_English.pdf

Rapley, J. (2007). *Understanding development: Theory and practice in the Third World* (3rd ed.). Lynne Rienner Publisher. Colorado.

Rhoades, R., & Booth, R. (1982). Farmer-back-to farmer: A model for generating acceptable agricultural technology. *Agricultural Administration, 11*(2), 127–137. https://doi.org/10.1016/0309-586X(82)90056-5

Sethi, T., Custer, S., Turner, J., Sims, J., DiLorenzo, M., & Latourell, R. (2017). *Realizing Agenda 2030: Will donor dollars and country priorities align with global goals?* Williamsburg, VA: AidData at the College of William & Mary. Retrieved from http://docs.aiddata.org/ad4/pdfs/Realizing_Agenda_2030.pdf

Sillitoe, P. (2006). Introduction: Indigenous Knowledge in Development. *Anthropology in Action, 13*(3), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.3167/aia.2006.130302

Southern Voice. (2019). *State of the SDGs: Global Report on the State of the Sustainable Development Goals (Briefing Note)*. Southern Voice. Retrieved from http://southernvoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Briefing-Note.pdf

The World Bank. (2016). *Principles and Practice in Measuring Global Poverty*. The World Bank. Retrieved from https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/01/13/principles-and-practice-in-measuring-global-povert y

UNDP. (2016). *The UNDP Evaluation Policy*. New York. NY. DP/ 2016/23. Retrieved from http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/policy/2016/Evaluation_policy_EN_2016.pdf

UNDP. (2018). *Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update*. The United Nations Development Program. New York, NY. Retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_human_development_statistical_update.pdf.

UNESC. (2018). *Compilation of Main Messages for the 2018 Voluntary National Reviews*. United Nations Economic and Social Council. E/HLPF/2018/5. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/HLPF/2018/5&Lang=E

UNESC. (2019). *Compilation of Main Messages for the 2018 Voluntary National Reviews*. United Nations Economic and Social Council. E/HLPF/2019/5. Retrieved from https://undocs.org/en/E/HLPF/2019/5

United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). (2012). *Evaluation Capacity in the UN System*. United Nations Evaluation Group. New York. NY. Retrieved from http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/1609

United Nations. (1951). *Measures for the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries*. Department of Social and Economic Affairs. United Nations Publications. No.: 1951.ILB.2. New York. NY. Retrieved from https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/708544?ln=en

United Nations. (2015). *The Millennium Development Goals Report. United Nations*. NY. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2015_MDG_Report/pdf/MDG%202015%20rev%20(July%201).pdf

United Nations. (2015). *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. United Nations. New York, NY. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/08/120815_outcome-document-of-Summit-for-ado

ption-of-the-post-2015-development-agenda.pdf

United Nations. (2016). *Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Global Level*. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 29 July 2016. United Nations General Assembly. New York, NY. A/RES/70/299. Retrieved from https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/299

United Nations. (2019). *Expert Group Meeting on Lessons learned from the first cycle of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)*. United Nations. New York, NY. Retrieved from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23135Summary_of_EGM_on_HLPF_review_FINAL.pdf

United Nations. (2019). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019*. United Nations. New York, NY. Retrieved from https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2019.pdf

Vedung, E. (1997). *Public policy and program evaluation*. Transaction Publications. New Jersey.

World Commission on Culture and Development (WCCD). (1995). *Our Creative Diversity*. *World Commission on Culture and Development* (2nd ed.). Paris: UNESCO.

Yonehara, A., Saito, O., Hayashi, K., Nagao, M., Yanagisawa, R., & Matsuyama, K. (2017). The role of evaluation in achieving the SDGs. *Sustain Science*, *12*(6), 969–973. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-017-0479-4

Note

Note 1. This classification of UN organizations was based on the JIU maturity matrix for central evaluation functions. The matrix is composed of 66 performance indicators benchmarked against a combination of inputs including United Nations Evaluation Group's (UNEG) norms and standards, JIU parameters from previous reports, and inputs from other international development actors assessing organizational effectiveness.

Copyrights