

Emerging Perspective from the Global South: Promoting Employment, Education and Skills for Inclusive Development



Proceedings of Panel Discussion on

“Emerging Perspective from the Global South: Promoting Employment, Education and Skills for Inclusive Development”

(July 07, 2015, India Habitat Center, New Delhi)

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The panel discussion on “Emerging Perspective from the Global South: Promoting Employment, Education and Skills for Inclusive Development” was conducted as part of Knowledge Partnership Programme supported by Government of United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) and IPE Global Private Limited (IPE Global) along with Institute for Human Development (IHD) as a content partner, on July 07, 2015 at the India Habitat Center, New Delhi. The panel discussion was preceded by the launch of a book titled “Human Development in the Global South: Emerging Perspectives in the Era of Post-Millennium Development Goals.” This book is a compilation of think pieces written by experts from several countries in the Global South, brought out by IHD with the support from DFID under the Knowledge Partnership Programme (KPP) implemented by IPE Global.

The half day academic event was divided into three sessions comprising the inaugural session, the book launch and the panel discussion. After the welcome and introductory remarks by Mr. Sunil Mitra, Team Lead, KPP and Ms. Ellen Wratten, Head DFID-India a Special Address was delivered by Dr. Jaco Cilliers, Country Director of UNDP India. This was followed by a presentation on the book “Human Development in the Global South: Emerging Perspectives in the era of Post Millennium Development Goals- 2015” by Dr. Tanuka Endow, Fellow, IHD and one of the editors of the book. Dr. Bibek Debroy, Member NITI Aayog launched the book and delivered the keynote address of the event. The ensuing Panel Discussion was chaired by Dr. Pronab Sen, Chairman, National Statistical Commission, and Country Director, International Growth Centre India Central Programme. Professor Alakh N. Sharma, Director, Institute for Human Development, New Delhi, Dr. Jaco Cilliers, Country Director, UNDP India, Professor Jeemol Unni, Professor of Economics and Director, Institute of Rural Management, Anand, Gujarat, Professor R. Govinda, Vice-Chancellor, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi participated as panelists in the panel discussion and enriched its deliberations. Participants including scholars, civil-society representatives, policy-makers, representatives of the international organizations and development practitioners participated in the question-answer session and shared their views. The Event concluded with a vote of thanks by IHD.

The welcome note for this session was delivered by Mr. Sunil Mitra, Team Lead, KPP who said that KPP in India, which drew support from IPE Global under the guidance of DFID, worked on multi-sectoral programmes aimed at improving the quality of life in African and South Asian countries. The intended reforms under such programmes have been implemented in the last two and half years. Mr. Mitra added that since March 2013, there have been intensive deliberations in the United Nations (UN) leading to 17 proposed sustainable development goals (SDGs). These goals have been described as action oriented, global in nature and universally applicable. These proposed goals, which take into account the varying contexts for different nations focus on: 1) leave no one behind; 2) put sustainable development at the core; 3) transform economies for inclusive growth; 4) build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all; and 5) forge a new global partnership. This process in India has been driven by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Wada Na Todo Abhiyaan, and has resulted in the culmination of a book which includes papers from the southern countries with considerable national concentrations.

Ms. Ellen Wratten, Head DFID India, apprised in her address that DFID works to end poverty globally and especially, economic empowerment of girls and women. She further added that DFID has worked with a range of international partners at the state and national levels, and is presently keen on working in partnership with India on issues such as climate change, sustainable development and smart cities, among others. This transition, she argued, is part of a wider shift in the world which should be taken up in the post- 2015 world, with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) being replaced with 17 SDGs, which also reflects the changes taking place globally. As the focus now shifts to implementation, there is a need for a stronger collective voice from South Asia to share their experiences globally.

A special address by Dr. Jaco Cilliers, Country Director, UNDP India, discussed the context of the present debate surrounding the SDGs at the very outset. In his address, Dr. Cilliers said that the UN has hosted several conferences on various themes and issues to address the main challenges globally. He argued that the combined outcome of these conferences is an opportunity for setting the global agenda for development in the post-

MDG period. All countries that have adopted the SDGs, should implement it with high priority. He further added that India plays a crucial role in this process as the attainment of these goals globally would be contingent on India's success in attaining them. Thus the SDGs can only be achieved if all countries collectively work towards it. Jobless growth is a major concern for developing countries with youth bulge; however, the global agenda to reduce poverty and inequality would help in addressing this global concern.

Dr. Cilliers summed up the SDGs succinctly as 3 Ps – people, profit and planet. According to him, these goals must balance the social needs of people, especially of the poor, and help them in contributing to this process. These also need to make sure that growth is incentive driven. And finally the goals must reflect the need to start caring about our planet as without the same, the future remains uncertain. The main challenge, thus, is the process of sustaining and balancing these three Ps.

The address by Dr. Cilliers concluded on the very relevant topic of skills development, mentioning that this process has been initiated in India along with several programmes, aimed at ensuring growth for all. Although India has experienced a steady reduction in the number of people living below the poverty line in the past several years, however, growth remained concentrated in the service and manufacturing sectors while the agricultural growth still lagged behind. Against this background, the recently approved National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, seeks to plug the skill gap and leverage the technological progress experienced by India. UNDP India is, thus, seeking to work with state governments and other initiatives to further this process which Dr. Cilliers felt could help in bringing a lot of women into the workforce. He concluded that as the world moves from MDGs to SDGs, there is a need to move towards inspired action as UNDP is committed to ensure a sustainable and inclusive future for all.



Dr. Cillier's address was followed by a presentation on the book "Human Development in the Global South: Emerging Perspectives in the Era of Post-Millennium Development Goals" by Dr. Tanuka Endow, who provided the major highlights from the book. The contributions in the volume have been arranged under the overarching theme of human development in the Global South, and broadly follow themes of poverty and social protection, food security and undernutrition, employment, education and health. Some of the major areas to be addressed in the post-2015 development agenda were highlighted as increasing inequality, multiple dimensions of poverty, need

for social protection, recognizing the interdependent nature of development goals, the need to unpack goals to a more disaggregated level, revamping financial structure, and the need to ensure commitment of all countries towards funding global development.

Dr. Endow also presented the highlights from the process which was initiated to organize a joint dialogue on the post-MDG 2015 development perspective involving leading academic scholars and experts from the Global South. This dialogue was started in 2013 by IHD and WNTA with the support from DFID and IPE Global, and had its basis in the concern over inadequate Southern engagement in international conversation revolving around post-2015 development agenda. An important milestone achieved under this partnership was publication of some 'Think Pieces' which were disseminated along the sidelines of the 68th General Assembly of the UN in 2013. An international symposium in 2014 followed around the central topic of the perspectives from the Global South in the post-MDG era, which saw the participation of 200 resource persons and delegates. Leading academic scholars and experts from the South joined to ensure that Southern voices are heard and views from China, Brazil, Turkey, Indonesia, and other South Asian countries were incorporated in this dialogue intended to feed into the post-2015 global agenda-setting process. The present book was an outcome of the above process.

"The global conversation is slowly crystallizing around a new set of goals which takes into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development. It is encouraging to see how some of the specific proposals advocated by Indian civil society are getting their due attention,"

-Ashwajit Singh, Chairman and Managing Director, IPE Global.

The launch of the book was followed by an address by Dr. Bibek Debroy, Member, NITI Aayog. At the very start of his address he stated that he was uncomfortable with the MDGs which, like the Human Development Indicators, are phenomenally successful in setting discourses and priorities; however, he stressed that a limited number of goals and targets would have been better in terms of attempts to achieve the same. Even after several rounds of discussions there remain far too many goals and targets expressed in a vague language. Dr. Debroy was of the view that given these issues, it is possible that SDGs might not be as successful as the MDGs. Further, he argued that there ought to be a distinction between inequality and inequity – while the former is the outcome and is reflective of problems of distribution, the latter refers to the inequitable access to inputs such as health, transport, law and order, etc. The focus thus should be much more on remedying inequity because if there is inequitable access, then inequality would automatically be present. He argued that it thus eventually boils down to a trade-off between delivering

public goods and delivering anti-poverty programmes as money spent on subsidies is actually money which is not spent on infrastructure and other areas. If public goods are delivered well, then demand for subsidies would inevitably decline.

“The focus should be on remedying inequity because if there is inequitable access, then inequality would automatically be present.”

“Just like the world has not fared badly with MDGs because of China; it may not fare badly with SDGs because of India.”

- Dr. Bibek Debroy, Member, NITI Aayog

Dr. Debroy further pointed out that the 14th Finance Commission recommended an increase in the percentage of public expenditure on public goods. Public goods are actually delivered by the local governments and not by the state governments, implying that devolution of power is in practice. Dr. Debroy suggested that there should be a complete revamp of the 7th Schedule and eventually a provision be made to transfer all funds to the local bodies.

Regarding the issue of directly targeting the poor, he cautioned against using data from National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) since it is a sample survey, and recommended the use of census report for such purpose. With the release of the Socio-economic and Caste Census data, for the first time state and union governments have arrived at a consensus that who should and should not be beneficiaries of subsidies. Dr. Debroy added that with some effort it would be possible to integrate the Socio-economic and Caste Census (SECC) data with National Population Register data which can then be matched with the Aadhaar bio metrics and Jan Dhan Yojana database to accurately identify the poor. Historically, the centrally sponsored schemes have been designed in Delhi and have remained divorced from the state/district level experience. The institutional base is now changing with Chief Ministers of states are recommending schemes such as the National Health Programme, Skill Development Mission, etc. which is required in a country like India so heterogeneous in character and has pockets of acute socio-economic deprivation. Dr. Debroy concluded his address by adding that just like the world has not fared badly with MDGs because of China; it may not fare badly with SDGs because of India.

The address was followed by a panel discussion on “Emerging Perspective from the Global South: Promoting Employment, Education and Skills for Inclusive Development” which was chaired by Dr. Pronab Sen, Chairman, National Statistical Commission and Country Director, International Growth Centre India and Central Programme. The panelists for this session included Prof. Alakh N. Sharma, Director, Institute for Human Development, New Delhi; Dr. Jaco Cilliers, Country Director,

UNDP India; Professor Jeemol Unni, Director and Professor of Economics, Institute of Rural Management, Anand; Professor R. Govinda, Vice-Chancellor, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi, and Mr. Andrew Preston, Senior Governance Adviser, DFID India.

The chairperson started the discussion with the statement made by Dr. Debroy that there are multiple indicators in the SDGs. He reminded the audience that in the 1950s, there was a UN Convention on Social and Economic Rights which has been forgotten in the past years. The MDGs, which were a declaration, were not rights based and unless the SDGs are made binding, the nations are merely told to do the best they can but without guarantee of any result. It is imperative to map the extent to which a general international agreement can be made binding to all, and yet be non-discriminatory in nature. Referring to the process undertaken, the problem, he argued, is that unless the terms are made very specific, the output would be very vague. Given the complex nature of the problem he requested the panelists to talk about how they perceive the issues pertaining to the existing situation and their experiences.



The first speaker in the Panel was Prof. Alakh N. Sharma who started by outlining the process that was undertaken jointly by IHD to facilitate a dialogue in the Global South on the post-MDG 2015 agenda. He stated that the task of this dialogue was not to figure out indicators but to get perspectives from Southern countries. He asserted that employment is the central theme on which the idea of development rests. Employment as a theme was not initially included in the MDGs but appended in 2008 only after a large number of people representing different disciplines felt that joblessness and lack of income are the main reasons for the lack of development. Prof. Sharma then went on to put across some key highlights on the employment situation in South Asian countries, particularly in India. He added that unemployment is not a proper indicator for evaluating developing countries characterised by low unemployment but very high incidence of underemployment. Labour Force Participation Rate in this region is very low for women in South Asia – while India and Pakistan have particularly low rates, Bangladesh seemed to have done better in this aspect in the recent years. Also, the growth of overall non-agricultural employment has been less than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in this region. Referring to Dr. Debroy's earlier comment on inequity and inequality, Prof. Sharma said that in this region, the two concepts are synonymous at this point of time.

Prof. Sharma further added that “Make in India” as a programme

could prove to be useful in India since manufacturing sector has not experienced sufficient growth. On the basis of the existing situations, indicators on employment should seek to assess the proportion of vulnerable and informal workers with a view to reducing the same and all such indicators also should have easy monitoring processes. He felt that the Southern countries can achieve these goals through measures such as integration of employment with economic growth: by assessing the poor working and living conditions of informal sector workers; and providing quality education which he felt was more important than skill levels. He concluded by saying that the question of youth bulge needs to be addressed as there is a lack of good quality jobs for the increasingly educated youth who will, in future, look for such jobs.



The Chairperson commented that the discussion on perspectives from the Global South can be broken down into two unequal parts – first, questions that needs to be addressed by local governments; and second, questions that should be projected at the global level so that local governments become more responsible. Hence, the international forum should not replace the national forum; there is a need for both to work in synergy to avoid imbalances in development. He then invited Professor R. Govinda to make his presentation.

Speaking on the goal for education (Goal 4 among the SDGs), Professor R. Govinda pointed out that the limited targets of the MDGs were more or less achieved, but this has also given rise to dissatisfaction due to problems of evaluation techniques which discredit all countries at some level or the other. The indicators and the yardsticks need to be modified in order to get a correct estimation. Commenting that Goal 4 was too wide in its scope, he opined that counting the number of children in schools must be replaced by an assessment of the quality of education received in a broad sense with both

quality and equity subjected to formal assessment. He added that education system is increasingly becoming ghettoized thus begging for some structural reform. In view of increasing private participation, particularly in higher education, new paradigms of public provisioning of education is required. However, the state governments, he felt, are not ready to invest more on the education system.

Prof. Govinda felt that in the post-2015 agenda, curricula should be reformed with greater emphasis on science and mathematics in order to meet the increasing demand for innovation, and research and development as these are being demanded by both market and the state. With more children in schools, there is now an increasing stock of youth with minimal education. Skill development programs are important in this context and should focus on the 10-20 years age group. Simultaneously, issues of poor teaching quality should be addressed by adopting innovative approaches for performance accountability. In conclusion, Prof. Govinda advocated the need for imbibing new sets of values in education such as environment ethics – which is not taught in secondary and higher education. He recommended that sustainable development ethics be made an integral part of the system of education, focusing not just on conservation and climate change but also on sustainable production, consumption and livelihoods. This has been highlighted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2015 where it has raised an agenda on ‘learning to live together’ and such values should be included in the educational systems globally.

The next panelist for the session was Prof. Jeemol Unni who, drawing from her experience from Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA), spoke on issues of economic empowerment, especially of rural women with reference to SDG Goal 5. She stated that there has been widespread feminisation of agriculture due to male migration. The size of landholdings is declining with two-third farmers working on less than one hectare of land that ultimately affects productivity. The decline in land availability, she argued, is creating conflicts. With the changes in the pattern of demands, the challenge is how to increase productivity and small enterprises in rural India. She pointed out that sub-goals 5A and 5B of the SDGs are vague as they do not specify the methods and processes that should be adopted. For instance, Goal 5A can have far-reaching impact if properly implemented, but land acquisitions can act as a major constraint. She further added that technology can give rise to discrimination in industries in various forms.

Prof. Unni highlighted the gender division of labour as very important as it leads to skill being undervalued. Also, since not all workers come under the purview of the Minimum Wages Act, most women remain excluded as either their work is not included in the schedules of the Act or they are considered to be unskilled workers. She further added that rural India is characterised by small producers who have low output and low surplus and hence have very little bargaining power. In this backdrop, collective bargaining helps in aggregation of products which in turn helps in fixing better prices for these products, e.g. the dairy cooperatives in Gujarat which provide sustainable livelihoods. Other collective organisations such as the Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO), which are included under the Companies Act, allows for the aggregation of products. There





are several such FPOs in other industries which have been successful and should thus be promoted across the country as they can support livelihoods throughout the value chains. Industrial Boards like the Khadi Board should be called upon to support their value chains.

With reference to women's leadership (Goal 5.5), the role of the Panchayats was underscored by Prof. Unni which through reservations enables women empowerment. She added that there is a need for more women's agencies to give them a collective voice on issues such as health, education, minimum wages, and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) among the others. The 73rd amendment had proposed for local plans but this mechanism now operates in a very different manner with ineffective devolution of power at various levels. Kerala is an example of how some states have successfully implemented local area plans through effective devolution of power and responsibility.

The next speaker, Dr. Jaco Cilliers suggested, from his experience in South Africa, attributed that the general approach should be to see the problem, to plan and then to take the necessary action, but in the case of the development goals the general approach adopted was to see, to plan and to then put the action off for later. This attitude, he felt, was responsible for the under achievement of the MDGs. Underscoring the need for commitment on the part of all countries, he said that all countries should collectively make plans which are then implemented with same focus and determination, or else the SDGs too might remain ineffective.

Dr. Pronab Sen added that the MDGs were fully internalised in our plan documents to which India added its specific requirements.

The final panelist for the session was Mr. Preston who said that best approach for implementation was to look at the whole list of 169 targets and choose the ones relevant and important for each country. In this regard he felt that it was important to assess how India adopts these goals and how it goes about implementing them. The main challenge, he felt, was on the question of where to start with the resources, what should be done and what data sources should be used for this assessment. India has wealth of experiences and success in various areas of

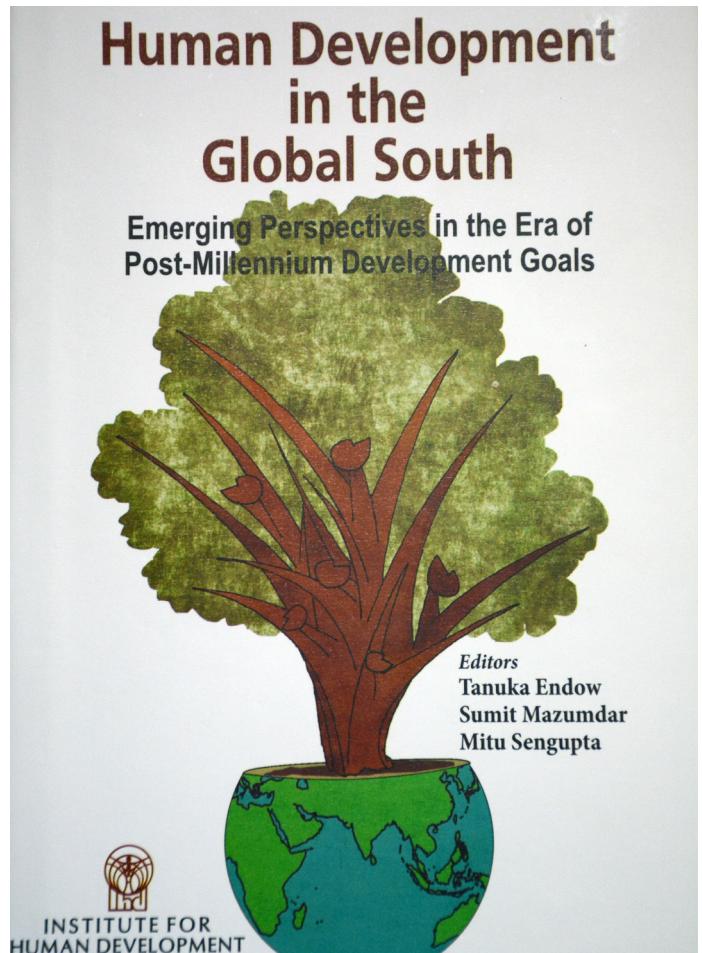
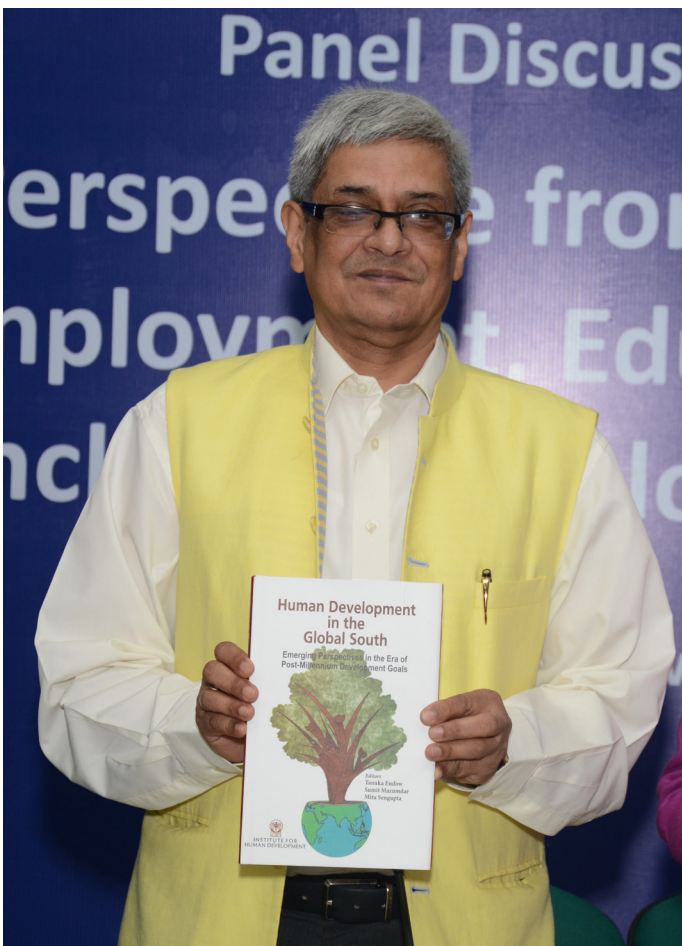
development, which he felt should be taken to the international level so as to encourage other countries and leaders in adopting similar measures.

At the end of the panel discussion, there was a round of questions and answers. Participants raised several questions about skill development, how skilling should be carried out, how to focus on skills for ITIs and vocational education programmes, the need to look at the demand side of skilling, and whether training everyone for everything is the solution. Prof. Govinda responded that skilling as an idea goes beyond formal systems and is for all, including the ordinary citizens. Skills are more important than demand or supply factors as there are many people who are skilled with no certification and are preferred since they are available at a lower cost. Dr. Cilliers added that one must look at the people who will enter the labour market and then assess as to what jobs are available for them and what are the skill requirements for such jobs, and then train these students accordingly.

In response to a question about the process through which skilling was to be developed given a situation where even the graduates have poor writing skills and are unable to express themselves, Prof. Govinda said that the new framework of communication skills should keep the global framework in mind. He argued that attention has never been given to articulation and capability is communication of results. In early grades at schools, emphasis has been on writing but not on reading which is essential.

It was pointed out by Prof. Agarwal from the Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi that commercialisation and politicisation of educational system is causing much harm as only those who can afford can access higher quality education, leading to exclusion for many. Structural reforms of the education system thus must be carried out. Prof. Indira Hirway from the Centre for Development Alternatives, Ahmedabad, pointed out that the entire SDG document has no reference to the question of human rights. She felt that there was a need for major reforms in terms of the structure of goals, decentralisation, etc. in order to make it more acceptable to all.

At the end of the day's discussion, the vote of thanks was delivered by IHD.





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