SUMMARY REPORT OF 2019 HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM SIDE EVENT:

Unleashing the Transformative Potential of the Agenda 2030 Through Participatory Approaches

TUESDAY, JULY 9TH 2019
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
UN CHURCH CENTER, 2ND FLOOR
777 UNITED NATIONS PLAZA, NEW YORK

MODERATOR OF THE EVENT:
MR. PAUL LADD, DIRECTOR, UNRISD
(UNITED NATIONS RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT)
OPENING REMARKS

Mansour Ndiaye
Chief Economist &
Head of Strategic
Partnerships and
Engagement,
UNDP Policy Bureau

In his opening remarks, Mr. Ndiaye presented the challenge of grounding the global 2030 Agenda not only at national level, but also at regional and local levels, through empowering people and their communities. The "whole-of-society" approach and the inclusion of the most vulnerable populations are central to realizing the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda is an ambitious one, as it seeks to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and exclusion, and leave no one behind.

Today, there are about 700 million people living on less than $1.90 per day and a total of 1.3 billion people who live in multidimensional poverty. Furthermore, half of the world’s poor live in extremely fragile and conflict areas. Even though technology and new innovations have developed tremendously, this poses the question as to why poverty continues to be such a prominent issue amidst these modern resources. The answer lies in pervasive inequalities among and across countries, which imply power structures, unequal distribution of resources, perception of oneself and of others, and most importantly weakening social contracts between citizens and states. If left unaddressed, inequalities tend to reinforce each other, perpetuating intergenerational poverty and exclusion.

Nevertheless, inequalities are not natural and are products of policies, laws and socio-cultural norms and practices. Four years after the adoption of the SDGs, we can say that many countries have adopted bold strategies and policies to leave no one behind, but others are still exploring how to do so. In this view, the UN Development System (includes UNDP) adopted a shared framework on Leaving No One Behind as well as internal guidelines on how to operationalize this concept.

In this way, UNDP looks to promote the ideals of the 2030 Agenda, as an Agenda for the people, and to offer support to countries looking to implement the Agenda, empower people and leave no one behind.
Unlocking the 2030 Agenda and Cultivating Civic Participation

Ms. Mireille Razafindrakoto began by explaining how the Agenda 2030 places strong emphasis on inclusivity and the promotion of participation of all members of society. She further expanded on the GPS Group for the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (GPS-SHaSa) initiative set out to collect statistical evidence of the progress towards the SGD 16 and Agenda 2063 in Africa.

The Agenda 2063 in Africa envisions a continent that is more peaceful, interwoven, and prosperous, “driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global area.” Harmonized survey methodology was applied by national statistical offices (NSOs) that used bottom-up interactions with stakeholders in addition to across-country support from African national statistician communities. She described how a survey was given out to different communities in Africa to measure their “perception, experience, and aspirations.” From this knowledge, institutional challenges were found to be the most prevalent.

Furthermore, the participation of civil society in the monitoring process made it possible for their perspectives to be shared. By enabling effective participation of ordinary citizens to monitor the SDGs, accountability could be ensured and voices could be heard.
Learning from the Participatory Research on the "Hidden Dimensions of Poverty":

Prof. Robert Walker presented the results of the international participatory research entitled the "Hidden Dimensions of Poverty," jointly led by Oxford University and ATD Fourth World in six countries (Bolivia, Bangladesh, Tanzania for the Global South, and France, the UK and USA for the Global North). This research sought to refine the understanding and measurement of poverty by engaging with people directly experiencing poverty, practitioners and academics.

The longer-term goal is that the research should contribute to more sensitive policy design at national and international level. This research based on the Merging Knowledge approach resulted in finding nine dimensions of poverty, including three new and core dimensions of poverty: Disempowerment, Struggle & resistance, and Suffering, body, mind, & heart. These were added to their six specified dimensions, which include Social maltreatment (discrimination), Institutional maltreatment, Lack of decent work, Insufficient and insecure income, Material and social deprivation and Unrecognized contribution.

In terms of formulating recommendations, Prof. Walker further stated that indicators for the six newly specified dimensions should be developed in a truly participatory manner. He encouraged other organizations including UN agencies to use these results and participatory methodology, and to recognise the value of knowledge coming from the direct experience of poverty.
Ms. Alexie Gasengayire presented on the vital conditions that were needed in order to create the concrete aspects of methodology in Tanzania for the project introduced by Prof. Walker. She explained how the research team gathered individuals with extremely diverse socio-economic backgrounds, including stone breakers, a shoemaker, and a vegetable vendor who were in poverty, teachers and a social workers (practitioners), and university professors (academics). She quoted one of the academics, Professor Kitojo, who said: “We academics talk about knowledge, but people living in poverty talk about what they are going through. Their emotions, their tears, speak beyond words.” Furthermore, Ms. Gasengayire highlighted some challenges that came with working with such a diverse group of people.

For example, some people in poverty were not able to participate because they could not provide for their families and so a compensation system had to be considered. Furthermore, the research team proceeded to physically visit people’s homes, explaining that everyone could contribute knowledge in their own way and that their research would in turn help to transform policies and build better futures for all. She explained that in order to carry out participation into action, the Merging Knowledge methodology made it possible for the research team to include everyone’s intelligence.

Overall, Ms. Gasengayire concluded that creating three key conditions for this Merging Knowledge approach was imperative for it to be successful. First, knowledge must come from those directly living in poverty and be held valuable by others with different types of knowledge. Second, each participant in the research must be adaptable and ready to be transformed themselves throughout the process. And finally, time, trust, and spaces of confidentiality and freedom are the most important conditions that should be at the core of all programs seeking to eradicate poverty.
(KEYNOTE SPEAKER № 4)

Kimberly Tyre

Activist With a Direct Experience of Poverty,
ATD Fourth World USA

Transformation Through Participation:

Activist Kimberly Tyre addressed her own experiences, both personal as someone living in poverty and as an active member of the MAP (Multidimensional Aspects of Poverty) research, and how the research had transformed her life by allowing her to seek action with the knowledge she gained. She explained how participation and equal opportunities to share one’s experiences gives those in poverty a sense of purpose and belonging to their community as it did for her. The MAP research project encouraged Kim to talk about her own experience in poverty and connect it with the experiences of others. She was able to enhance her own skillsets that she already possessed as well as develop new skill such as public speaking.

Today, Ms. Tyre is establishing her own online university and implementing the tools she learned from the MAP research by facilitating discussion groups, breakout sessions, icebreakers, and post-it exercises in her program. After learning and researching with the team, she now wants to help make others aware of the entrenchment and multi-dimensional aspects of poverty. Being a part of this project brought exposure not only to academics and practitioners, but also to other people in poverty, often times in foreign countries, who experienced similar circumstances despite their distance from one another.

Ms. Tyre further spoke about the need for social workers to be trained to deal with poverty as a systemic issue rather than a result of wrong decisions made by people in poverty. Likewise, everyone must understand that social workers have a job to do that is often governed by rules and regulations set forth for them by higher ups. Finally, she urged the need for policies and institutions to implement this research in their curricula through co-training and action. She stressed the amount of time that the research took, three long years full of “sweat, labor, frustration, good times and bad times,” that are all insignificant unless action takes place and is transformative. Therefore, Ms. Tyre wants to leave behind her legacy of “talking about it and talking about it until something is done.”
Erika Franco Lopez
Researcher at the Participation, Inclusion and Social Change team, Institute of Development Studies, UK

Participatory Research: From Intersecting Inequalities to Accountable Relationships

Ms. Erika Franco Lopez explains the main recurring theme in discussions around the SDG is a call for acceleration. A more pressing question remains as to how people who are left behind from the policies, programs, and outreach process can actually have a voice. She describes the participatory research her team conducted in 2014 that tried to understand how people in poverty have been trying to achieve accountability of those in power.

Participatory accountability approaches are characterized by three key elements, including the need for marginalized communities and their priorities, those who are most affected, to be at the center of driving accountability. The process for achieving accountability also must be contextually driven and dynamic and not solely a linear process because groups from different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds always have different ways of engaging with their power holders.

Lastly, she emphasized conciliation, contestation, and confrontation tactics that were important strategies used to challenge those power holders that were not being held accountable. She also explained how her research has explored the concept of intersecting inequalities which add to the different dimensions of poverty including spatial and socioeconomic inequalities that are fundamental for those who experience exclusion and poverty. Ultimately, the main question of her research addresses the ways in which participation processes can support those people who are experiencing poverty directly to be able to start talking to those who have power and ensure accountability.
**BREAKOUT SESSION**

**Working Group 1: How can we transform the new dimensions of poverty into policy and practice?**

*Facilitated by Rachel Bray (Oxford University) and Sophie Boyer (ATD Fourth World Bolivia)*

**Key Messages and Recommendations emerging from group discussion:**

- Change is needed at both an individual/micro level and at a social/macro level.
- A dual approach is needed because the dimensions are linked. For example, suffering can be reduced by addressing both mental illness and broader social attitudes that exclude, shame, or even despise people living in poverty.
- How we represent people living in poverty matters more than we might think.
- Many international organizations routinely use pictures of people living in poverty, or who are marginalized in other ways, that are undignified. We must lobby to replace these and involve people in choosing images.
- Opening spaces for people to see themselves as leaders is very important.
- Saying that we now recognize the enormous contributions made by people living in poverty is meaningless unless we change our behavior.
- Those of us who are in relatively powerful positions (regardless of our position in our organization) must make space for people who have been marginalized in various ways. This means moving aside and handing over opportunities as routes to achieving equity.
Framing the Conversation:
Changing damaging perceptions about marginalized groups
Identifying champions and building alliances
Identifying gaps in the mechanisms of accountability
Working with and through organizations as translocators

Key Points and Recommendations emerging from group discussion:
Poverty is not normal
Transformation is not possible without people
People have knowledge!
We must recognize the knowledge of people with direct experience of poverty or marginalization
The poor have power: It is important to dismantle internalized stigma first.
Time counts – Extreme poverty and emergency causes extreme problems/breaks down accountability

These messages were then turned into Tweets:

1. **TIME TO ACT!! #Extreme #poverty is an emergency; citizens must hold to account all the powerful actors who are not doing enough to end it! #SDG1 #HLPF19**

2. Dismantling internalised stigma is a PRIORITY so the poor discover their collective power as TRUE #transformation is not possible without people experiencing poverty @praxis_india

3. The labelled ‘poor, marginalised, vulnerable, etc.’ have knowledge; it is time to recognise the knowledge of those who TRULY know @ATD4thWorld
Key Messages and Recommendations emerging from group discussion:

- A sense of ownership of the SDGs relies on local processes that connect people, enable listening and ensure fluid communication between all levels.
- Transformative approach that recognizes local knowledge as relevant inputs
- Move away from relying only on quantitative data, towards approaches that include qualitative data
- Re-working national approaches to achieving SDGs so that these include a negotiation process between governments and local people
- Improve processes for achieving transparency
- This is about quality of life, so we need to engage local champions in the process
- Work on a literacy strategy to expand understanding of the SDGs
- Research needs to be a transformative process