

Goal 17

Revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

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Achieving Sustainable development requires strong commitment and cooperation between countries. This is why the Sustainable Development Goals' Goal 17 aims to *"Revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development"*. This may sound obvious, but it does bear asking: *"Why exactly is cooperation necessary?"* There are at least three obvious reasons. The first is that much *environmental* pollution knows no borders. Its solution requires cooperative action. The second is that *economies* are also not confined to national borders through trade, mobility and exchange. The third, is that for many of us it is of dubious morality to limit our sphere of concern to national boundaries.

The good news is that we are already more interconnected than ever. The number of Internet users in Africa almost doubled in the past four years: 30 per cent of the world's youth are digital natives, active online for at least five years. And, in more good news, Official Development Assistance (ODA) stood at \$135.2 billion in 2014, the highest level ever recorded, having increased by 66 percent between 2000 and 2014. The bad news, is however, as the other authors indicate, that in parallel, environmental challenges and conflict have also increased. Simply put, sixteen goals remain to be seen to.

So we may ask, *"Who do we want to increase cooperation among"*. The answer is among and within countries: we want it between North and South, between South and South, within the countries themselves and among all parties. More pertinently then, *"How do we get it"?*

The first, perhaps most obvious solution is to throw money at it: finance! Countries are held to honour their ODA commitments and to mobilise new resources. Help is required to develop country ability to mobilise their own resources (tax revenue), to improve the long term debt sustainability and to create investment promotion regimes. Money has the power to transform and deliver on sustainable development objectives, to create the kind of public goods that the market does not provide. Think of the critical sectors mentioned in the other goals: the need for sustainable energy, infrastructure and transport, education, information and communications technologies. The second prospect is cooperation on science and in particular, on environmentally sound technologies. Despite the increase in internet penetration, of the four billion people do not use the Internet, 90 per cent are from the developing world. Linked to this is the need for targeted capacity-building, to support national plans. Thirdly, we need cooperation on matters of trade, promoting trade that is fair, open and simple, to help developing countries increase their exports.

More broadly however, we need economic policy that promotes sustainable development, that respects individual country policy and that promotes stability. In fact, in all countries no matter what the status of development is, we need better ways of measuring success and of monitoring; we need to go beyond measurement of the Gross Domestic Product to start considering more domains of quality of life as the goals against which policy, and politics is held to account. Better measurements of country performance will stimulate improved regulation to get polluters (rather than society) to pay, to internalise the external and social costs of economic activities: being held to account on environmental quality as well

as GDP will help to green economies around the world. The knowledge of how to do this exists, and it is a matter of taking it off paper into action in more countries.

Similarly, despite the fact that we have learnt a lot about how to make better regulation, we still broadly rely on old frameworks that rely on rational processing of information. We tend to assume that what government needs to do is to give people the information they lack or the necessary incentive to get them to behave in line with goals - and certainly that is important. But behavioural research has led us to understand the potential of recognizing that people are not just rational self-interested entities. We need to design policy accordingly. By the same token, we need to recognise that governments fail too. We need stronger oversight functions, checks and balances. We also need to build in policy testing, piloting, trials as part of the natural policy cycle, before rolling it out into new contexts.

We also stand to gain from the potential of public-private partnership, from partnerships with civil society. The satisfaction of volunteering, the potential of people in their social selves is often ignored as a potential solution, and as a result policy may frustrate it. Tapping altruism is a win-win making rendering happier people on both sides of the give-take equation. This may sound like a paradigm shift, but really it is only a step back into the obvious: we buried the wheel, but we can find it again!

I mentioned, at the start of this presentation that there are environmental, economic and social reasons for cooperation. But there is a fourth reason, and that is, that we will do better. As the African saying goes, "If you want to go fast, go alone but if you want to go far, go together".

Sources:

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