

Mobilising Global Support for the SDGs

When the Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by world leaders in September 2015, there was much excitement and great anticipation around world about the new era of inclusive development and sustainable living that they could usher the world into over the course of the 15 years the efforts were expected to take. We are presently about 6 years into the efforts and with about 9 years away from the 2030 date set for the attainment of the goals. The latest progress reports are however, showing that we are not on track to meet several of the goals. The COVID19 crisis has further compounded the situation, and there are growing calls from different quarters requesting that the goals be scaled down.



The situation though gloomy, can still be remedied, it would however require a major shift from the present position where responsibility for the attainment of the Goals has been mainly placed in the hands of governments. The global development community would need to make concerted efforts to mobilise the private sector and possibly everyone on the planet behind the effort.

The past 6 years have clearly shown that government alone cannot handle the task, and that the private sector and indeed every one of us, has a crucial role to play in order for us all to attain the goals.

Please find below a number of initiatives that would help in mobilising the global support required to ramp up efforts on the SDGs, and provide the global development community a good shot at attain the Global Goals by 2030.

Generating greater awareness around the world for the Global Goals

The 2.7 billion mobile phone users around the world can be mobilised to be a part of the global effort, if Google and Apple (the two major producers of mobile phone operating systems) agree to incorporate the Samsung Global Goals mobile-app

<https://www.samsung.com/global/galaxy/apps/samsung-global-goals/> as a standard

application from 2020 on all their new and old Android and IOS operating systems. The Global Goals mobile-app enlightens phone owners of what each of the Global Goals is about and provides them with the opportunity to donate to any goal of their choice.

Sports are a great mobilization tool and can be used in promoting awareness of the Global Goals. This would involve getting every sports association in the world along with their major stars players to adopt and actively support one Sustainable Development Goal. This will for example entail FIFA and all its regional and national associations adopting one Goal, while the NBA, the NFL, the PGA, Formula 1 racing, PTA and others, to take on one SDG each. If the cricket association and its major stars would for instance adopt a particular SDG, you can be rest assured that almost everyone in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh would become aware of that Goal and what they can do to support it.

To help retain the continuing support and interest of the fans, short video clips of projects pertaining to the SDGs that are being funded by the sport associations around the world would be aired during game intervals. This visibility would go a long way in helping to bring the issue of sustainable living and international development to the forefront of national consciousness in countries around the world, and might challenge some fans to become more personally involved, either in their individual capacity or as decision makers in the institutions they work for. This is especially important as corporations, foundations, universities, and other private actors now play a significant role in global economic development by their foreign direct investment, remittances, grants, technical expertise and other forms of assistance.

International & national professional associations for lawyers, engineers, architects, doctors, teachers, accountants and others should also be enlisted in the global effort at mobilising everyone behind the Global Goals. Like the sporting bodies, these will be encouraged to adopt a particular SDG; preferably one that relates in some way with their profession, and requested to promote it at their events, embark on projects that contribute to the attainment of the SDG and to encourage their members to actively seek for ways of supporting it.

Considering the powerful influence that the movie, theatre, news and social media industry has on the society, they should also be co-opted in the effort. By using well targeted video clips and infographics, these can together change the tide of global opinion on climate change -SDG13 or life below water – SDG14, and move the world to make the urgent changes we need to make before we go past the tipping point. I strongly believe that if the major players in Hollywood came together to make a powerful movie on climate change, like the music industry did with the “We are the world” song several years back, much stronger pressure could be brought to bear on the political leaders holding back on required climate action, possibly including boycotts of products coming from their country, to as it were help them cut back on production and by extension carbon emission.

The public enlightenment component of our proposed Education for All initiative <https://bit.ly/2Ujh8oh> can be used to create climate awareness and teach climate resilience in rural and disadvantaged communities.

The above channels can also be used to educate people on our interdependent destinies as citizens of planet earth, and the fact that:

- With globalization, we are becoming much closer to people in faraway countries, and our efforts at getting rid of poverty will make for a better world for everybody.
- Many of the problems which affect us like wars, conflicts, international crime, refugee crisis, trade in illegal drugs, the spread of diseases like Ebola, HIV and AIDS, are caused or made worse by poverty in developing countries.
- In a world of growing wealth, a situation where over a billion people (about one in five of the world's population) still live in extreme poverty, ten million children die before their fifth birthday (most of them from preventable diseases) and millions of children cannot afford to go to school, is not only morally unacceptable, it is also against our own interest.

Bridging the SDGs funding gap

In its 2016 report, Oxfam revealed that the world's 62 richest people possess as much wealth as the poorest 3.6 billion, and its 2017 report on the same subject showed that the inequality continues to widen - <https://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressreleases/2017-01-16/just-8-men-own-same-wealth-half-world>.

While the instinctive reaction of most people would be to demonise the wealthy as being responsible for the situation, a more constructive way of looking at it is to productively engage the wealthy in the global effort to check the growing inequality and eradicate extreme poverty.

A good number of the wealthy are good people who have worked very hard to acquire their wealth and distinguish themselves in business. If successfully enlisted in the global development effort, they can bring their valuable business skills and result driven approach to bear in addressing several of the issues bedevilling the world. It could be that some of today's lingering economic development challenges, that have not yielded to the traditional aid workers approach of doing things, might just respond to their result driven business approach of getting things done.

If the global Top 1% (70 million of the world's 7 billion population), who account for over 45% of global household wealth can each be encouraged to adopt one of the Sustainable Development Goals or a community in one of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and commit to expend on it an amount equal to 0.5% of their net worth annually, the huge SDGs funding gap that the global development community is presently grappling with would be significantly reduced.

The billionaires among them (currently numbering about 2,043) could be encouraged to team together and adopt the 47 LDCs between themselves, engaging with the governments of the countries and seeking out ways in which they can bring their wealth and business acumen to bear, in turning around the fortunes of those countries.

If a Bill Gates or Jeff Bezos adopts Ivory Coast, they could for instance, very easily bring in resource persons from within Microsoft/Amazon to help set up world class budgeting, strategic planning and cost control system in the country or a cloud-based e-government system, and other process improvement systems, that would rival the best in the world, significantly improving the level of service delivery by the government.

Ivory Coast presently earns less than 20 cents from every \$1 that the final consumer pays for the chocolates produced from the raw cocoa exported from the country, and about the same amount from the furniture produced from the unprocessed timber exported from the country. A much higher value can be captured in-country with great implications for foreign exchange earnings and local income cum poverty alleviation efforts, if Bill Gates/Jeff Bezos invests in the local production of a chocolate and furniture brand within Ivory Coast, and endorses them to aid their acceptance by international consumers.

I strongly suspect that if a number of billionaires had been brought on board to help facilitate an economic turnaround in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, the world would probably have been amazed at the chain of economic activities that they could have set in motion by their strategic investments (FDI) in the country, and the transformation it could have help bring about in the country. Possibly much more than the uncoordinated billions in aid money that has been poured into the country over the years without much results to show for it.

All that it would for instance, take to turn around the fortunes of a small Kenyan or Ethiopian community facing the devastating effects of climate change and erratic rainfall, might just be the provision of a few solar powered water boreholes, plus the supply of mini drip irrigation kits to farmers in the community and the provision of sustainable agricultural training. All of which would cost less than \$40,000 (cheaper than several luxury cars); something that an upper middle-income individual can easily donate without being the worse off for it -

https://www.ted.com/talks/william_kamkwamba_how_i_harnessed_the_wind

Global Pension funds asset was \$44.1 trillion in 2018, and negative yield government bonds reached a record \$15 trillion in 2019. Efforts should be made to encourage the managers of these funds to invest a portion of their portfolio with the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and with the regional development banks, for on lending to developing countries. The IDA's updated Sustainable Development Finance Policy will for

instance ensure that beneficiary projects are properly scrutinized, and that lending is only extended to nations that have sound debt management policies. This provides further guarantee of the safety of the funds placed with the institution; addressing the major fear that has kept these funds from been channelled into impact investing projects in developing countries.

Other initiatives that can be pursued to help bridge the SDGs funding gap could include:

Encouraging consumers around the world to agree to paying a 2% Global Goals contribution on certain “luxury goods”. Funds generated from a 2% Global Goals contribution on pet food and care in OECD countries could for instance cover a significant part of the World Food Program’s (WFP) 2018 budget of \$7.36 billion, without the pet owners being any worse off for it.

Similar contributions on hotel rooms, restaurant bills, sports kits and club registration fees, movie tickets, football, baseball and baskets game tickets, etc can make a world of difference in the lives of children and families in the Least Developed Countries around the world, and the people that bear the surcharge can proudly feel a part of the efforts to solve global problems.

It would be best if the umbrella association that the organisations taking these contributions belong to, focus on particular SDGs. The contributions from the hotel group could for instance be dedicated to slum upgrades and addressing homelessness. This will make for greater efficiency in the collection and disbursement of funds, and it will allow specialised skills to be developed along particular fields by those managing the project. The arrangement also makes it possible to achieve quick results and significant impact, as the funds are not spread too thinly over several unrelated projects.

The guiding principle should however be that the contributions should be set at a level that doesn’t pinch the payers, and that the operational cost of running the initiative is minimized.

Funding Infrastructure Deficit

“From now through 2030, the world will need to spend at least \$57 trillion to build the ports, power plants, rails, roads, telecommunications, water systems, and other infrastructure that the global economy needs... Emerging economies account for 60 percent of required infrastructure investment”

McKinsey & Co - The infrastructure conundrum 2015

Governments around the world are pressed for funds to provide the infrastructure that their economies crucially need, and they are actively promoting Public Private Partnerships (PPP) as an option for raising the required capital.

The Top 1% can be mobilised to help fund some of such projects. These projects are not to be undertaken as philanthropic projects, but rather as purely PPP business projects that would yield economic returns for the investors, while touching the lives of countless people in the affected country. These types of investments are not likely to yield as much as investments in other sectors, but investors can take comfort in the fact that they are touching lives – impact investing.

Billionaires that find campaigns such as the Giving Pledge - www.givingpledge.org, a little too altruistic for their liking, might find the above option much more suitable to meeting their philanthropic aspirations.

Engaging Wealthy Governments

I would also like to suggest that global development leaders seek to get all the ultra-wealthy countries around the world whose citizens do not presently pay personal income tax, to begin to do so, even if the tax rates are just a nominal amount of about 4% - 6%. Some part of the amount so collected can be used to fund projects in the country itself, while the bulk can be used to fund humanitarian and development efforts in their region and around the world.

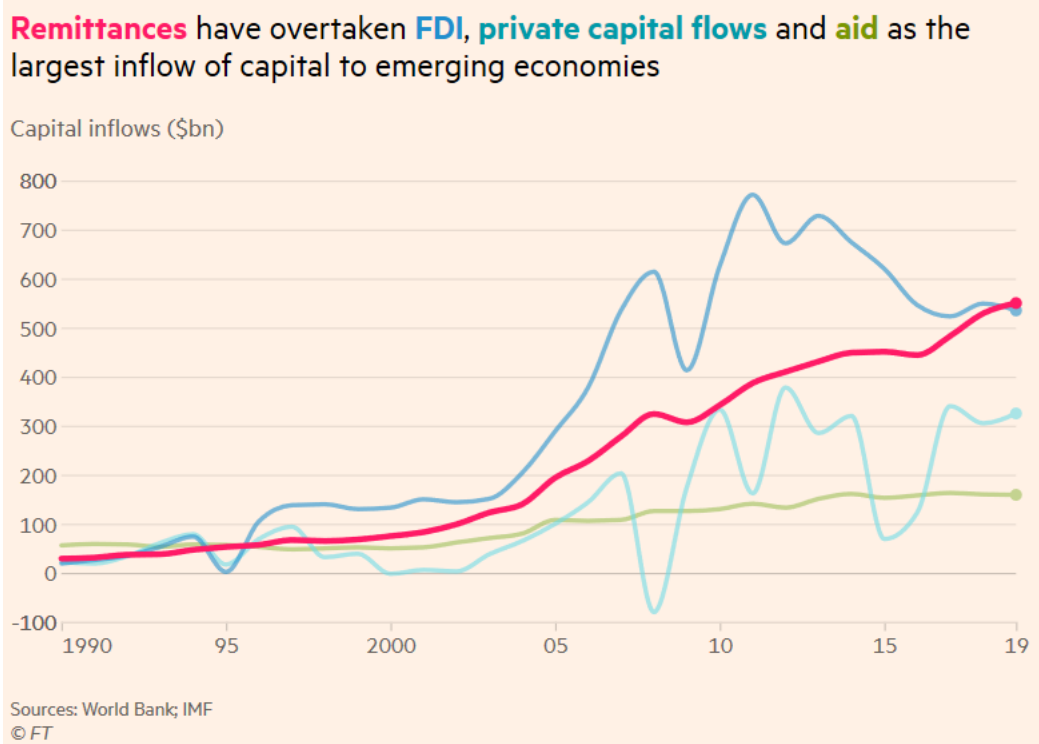
For instance, if countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) introduce such an initiative, they can allocate 40% of the amounts so collected to fund domestic infrastructure projects, allocate 30% to humanitarian and development projects in the Middle East, and allocate the remaining 30% to funding similar projects in the countries where the bulk of the labourers that built their country, and help to keep it running, hail from. This would be a great way of saying thank you to those countries for the labour of their young people.

The world should also seek to encourage countries/territories like Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore which have small populations, but huge foreign reserves, \$400+ billion, \$300+ billion and \$200+ billion respectively, to consider playing a more active role in the funding of international development efforts.

Both of the above initiatives would be a great way of educating the citizens of such wealthy countries of the challenges that less fortunate people around the world face, and hopefully inspire them to get personally involved in addressing it – the Soft Power Council recently inaugurated in the UAE is a hopeful step in that direction.

Involving the diaspora population

Diaspora home remittances are being investigated as a potential source of funding for SDGs efforts. This is especially so as remittances overtake foreign capital inflows into some developing countries - <https://ig.ft.com/remittances-capital-flow-emerging-markets/>



Many developing countries have a significant diaspora population that can be mobilized to help address some of its developmental challenges, using their financial resources, their technical and professional expertise, and leveraging their overseas business contacts to open trading opportunities or attracting investments into the country.

The possibilities for using these flows to enhance localized SDGs efforts and bring about regional transformation are elaborated upon here – <https://bit.ly/3aHUWKd>

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the huge SDGs funding gaps and the decision by some major donors to cut back on their aid budget, the majority of the Global Goals can still be achieved by the 2030 target, if the mobilization programs enumerated above are successfully implemented. The key is mobilizing the world's population behind the effort. The success or otherwise of the effort, would affect every one of us, so there is no reason why we shouldn't be all involved in its accomplishment.

The drive will not only increase awareness and help mobilize financial resources for the SDGs, they would also help build local pressure group that would compel political leaders to take the difficult decisions that will come up along the way.

We must not give in to the naysayers and doubters. There is so much that can still be accomplished in the 9 years between now and 2030, and the world is looking up to us to deliver on what we promised in 2015.

Yes we can!!!

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And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men... Galatians 6:9-10