

Panel on Means of Implementation and Global Partnership for Development

Focus: Technology Facilitation, Transfer and Assessment

Panelist: Elenita Daño, ETC Group – on behalf of Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, Women Major Group.

Today, we live in a world where 67 richest individuals own wealth equal to the poorest 3.5 billion people; where two-thirds of the 774 million adult illiterates are women. The game that breeds this obscene inequality in wealth and access to opportunities must be changed. This is THE serious challenge that lay before the post-2015 development agenda.

Technology is partly responsible for this grossly unequal and divided world. As much as 80% of recent economic “growth” can be credited to technological change, but has overwhelmingly benefitted the wealthiest sectors in the North. On the other hand, technology is a key enabler for sustainable development and has the potential to be a game-changer. Technology plays a role in attaining each of the proposed SDGs.

A transformative development agenda should ensure that an increasing share of beneficial technological changes takes place within – and for – developing countries. The South should have facilitated and fair access to the best of proven, environmentally sound and socially appropriate technologies. Gender and equity aspects related to technology access, development and transfer must be addressed. Indigenous and endogenous technologies for ecologically sustainable, culturally appropriate and socially just development must be strengthened.

It’s a shame that the sparse recommendations on technology that received the consensus of Member-States in the PGA’s Technology Dialogues last year, nor those offered by the UN SG in his Synthesis Report, will not change the game where the have’s (mainly through the private sector) transfer their technologies, including harmful ones, to the have-not’s for a price. These sets of recommendations are way far from bringing a global technology facilitation mechanism that was envisioned in the “World We Want” into reality.

An enabling environment for technology is important, but private sector-led market approaches cannot deliver the ambitions of the SDGs. The world urgently needs a global technology facilitation mechanism that is based on a transformative vision of technology as a means to bridge horizontal and vertical inequalities, ensure access to basic resources, and serve the needs of disadvantaged sectors especially women. Technology should not remain as a means to further monopolize knowledge, amass more profits and marginalize those who cannot afford to pay. It must stand on equitable economic and social structures to be an effective means to attain development justice.

The dominant model of technology transfer that masks market expansion for new and old technologies of the North, needs to be challenged. The development and promotion of endogenous technologies, and the recognition of the capacity to develop innovations in the South are strategically important and should be defended fiercely in SDG9.

Currently, the total global public and private sector investment in research and development is over \$1 trillion. More than 90% of research is focused on particular needs of advanced economies - including their military needs – but will bring few products that

are accessible to or useful for the poor in both rich and poor countries. At present, R&D follows where the money is, and innovators are only accountable to shareholders, but not to society. This must change. R&D must be channeled to address development challenges in food production, disaster reduction, education, nutrition and health in environmentally-sound, culturally-appropriate and socially-just manner towards eliminating poverty, with special attention to the needs of women. While women remain a minority in “hard technology” fields such as engineering, it is not an excuse for coming up with technologies that are designed only for men since women constitute nearly half of rural labor.

Vital to unleashing the power of technology as a means to attain sustainable development is the issue of ownership and control. Existing IPR regimes build monopolies that reap profits for a few rather than address poverty, marginalization and inequality. When six giant corporations control 53% of the global seed market and 75% of the agrochemical market in the face of the climate crisis that threatens the survival of the poorest, serious doubts must be raised on whether providing incentives to innovations benefits the common good. This situation needs to be addressed head on.

The proposed global partnership on research, development, demonstration and diffusion of new technologies should be based on multi-stakeholder participation, solution-driven and accountable governance of technology and innovation. While the increasing role of South-South technology cooperation has been recognized, this should not be seen as a substitute for North-South cooperation. North-South technology transfer, however, should transform into strategic cooperation that aims to develop the capacity of the South to innovate and develop its own technologies.

Any global technology partnership should include assessment and monitoring of how new technologies affect peoples' lives and the environment. As recognized at Rio+20, the world needs a multilateral mechanism to help developing countries to identify unsustainable technologies and to protect their citizens from adverse consequences of these technologies. We need not wait for negative effects of technology to become too serious to ignore, as with asbestos, nuclear pollution or fracking, when it is already too late to undo the harm done or make the culprit pay for the damages caused. Technologies that have potential to damage Earth systems such as geoengineering must be banned. The participation of women and potentially affected sectors in decision-making through all stages of technology development including technology assessment is critical. These are indispensable elements in any technology facilitation mechanism.

True, attaining sustainable development in the post-2015 era will require the full use of science, technology and innovation. BUT that will only happen if these means are people-oriented, inclusive, gender-fair, participatory and have development justice at the core.

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