

DEVELOPMENT: INCREASING ITS LEGITIMACY



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Literature is replete with theories of development - what it means, how it should be approached and what it encompasses. As divergent as perspectives may be, they are founded on the principle that the intention of “development” is collective progress i.e. the net positive advancement of humankind.

Early approaches to development focused mainly on economic aspects, which resulted in a widening gap between rich and poor countries, and the devastation of the environment. This “economics-only” approach threatened to undermine not only the economic gains of the current generation, but also the survival of generations to come. This goes against the intention of development as it does not conform to the principle of the net positive advancement of humankind.

Broadening this thinking beyond economics and the environment; human, social factors and even technological factors should form a core part of what development theory and practice considers. Thus, the posit here is that more legitimate development is achieved by broadening the scope of what “development” considers.

Going further, if we think about each development consideration as pillar of development, then the legitimacy of development may also be increased by more deeply investigating the context and nuances within each pillar. For example, within the economic pillar alone, there are contextual nuances, which if not acknowledged and studied appropriately, could well result in the undermining of development outcomes.

A valid conclusion based on the foregoing is that two tenets of increasing development legitimacy are:

1. Expanding the scope of development considerations i.e. economic, environmental, social, human and other factors
2. Deepening the investigation of each consideration

Feeding this evolved thinking into updated policy and legislation, such that it is systematized into development practice, is the final tenet toward improving development legitimacy, which is:

3. Perpetuating a virtuous cycle of policy and legislation review, in line with new insights gained from the field as well as evolved theoretical considerations.

These three tenets which are proposed as a new conceptual framework to undergird more legitimate development approaches are often overlooked, and with detrimental consequences – including wasted resources, disenfranchised stakeholders and missed opportunities.

About the Author

Kelly-Ann Phillips is a Development Impact Professional with more than a decade of experience managing and implementing projects which progress the development agenda in Caribbean, and more recently, in the UK.

She has been involved in initiatives which encourage youth involvement in agriculture, combat Violence Against Women & Girls, promote female involvement in the ICT sector, and facilitate digital transformations.

Kelly-Ann holds an MSc Implementation and Management of Development Projects, with Distinction, from the University of Manchester; and she is also certified in related areas through the IDB, the UN and the University of Adelaide, Australia