

## COMMUNITY NOTE

### **Agenda Knowledge for Development Conference, Fall 2016 in Vienna, Austria**

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In order to draw the public eye to the importance of knowledge in setting an international agenda for development, the Austrian Knowledge for Development (K4Dev) community is calling for a summit to be held in Vienna with the aim of drafting a set of ‘Knowledge Development Goals’ that complement the UN development agenda embodied in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2016-2030. The impulses, ideas and proposals put forth by leading minds from academia, industry, politics and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will be gathered, distilled and published in an ‘Agenda Knowledge for Development.’

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More than ever before, developmental aid and expertise are central to the cause of human advancement. As the pace of globalisation accelerates, it brings with it opportunities for more cohesion amongst societies, but also risks of greater chasms. Political turmoil and economic languish are upsetting the balance of traditional social structures, especially across developing regions of the world. As the living situation of disadvantaged peoples in these regions grows increasingly precarious, our efforts at building sustainable infrastructures to combat poverty, violence and uncertainty must be strengthened and secured by vision and, above all, knowledge. Knowledge is a bottleneck for development in most developing countries, and could be a multiplier for all development efforts. Knowledge can strengthen cohesion and nurture economic development, inclusion, participation and more.

The European Union has named the year 2015 its European Year of Development and the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were conceived in September 2000, expired at the end of 2015. The new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted at the UN General Assembly in July 2015 which, according to the UN, will ‘build upon the Millennium Development Goals and converge with the post 2015 development agenda’ (UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20 website) Unfortunately, the relevance of knowledge is insufficiently reflected in these development goals.

Although the stated aim of ‘ensur[ing] inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ (Goal 4) is closely linked with individual knowledge, and although the relevance of sharing knowledge as a resource for achieving the SDGs has been recognized, the complex nature of knowledge on a wide scale, with its broad economic, social, cultural and societal implications, is not sufficiently manifested in the SDGs. Since the 1990s, the still growing Knowledge for Development (K4Dev) community, based in Austria, has been raising awareness about the application of knowledge in development, which has since become an issue of the UN Millennium Project (see, for example, UN Millennium Project 2015). However, the necessary awareness to anchor knowledge explicitly as an issue within the top-level development agenda has still not been achieved. K4Dev is an initiative driven by a global community of experts. It reimagines international development as a knowledge-based approach to improving living conditions in underprivileged regions of the world. A lot has been achieved and executives in international organisations, industry, governments and NGOs would affirm the consideration afforded to knowledge in societies. Nevertheless, there is still no wholesome knowledge development concept in existence and no roadmap to realising it.

In order to aid the promotion of a more comprehensive and more visible international development agenda, one that places knowledge at the heart of development work, the K4Dev community is looking to draw unprecedented attention from the global leadership towards the importance of knowledge as a vehicle for development. The intention is to invite thought-leaders from a wide spectrum of fields and together with the international K4Dev community conceive a new set of Knowledge Development Goals (KDGs) for the year 2030 and to formulate a knowledge agenda to achieve these goals. We hope to distil this collection of objectives into a platform under the name ‘Agenda Knowledge’ which serves to deliberate and reflect the greater importance of a knowledge-based approach to development efforts. It is hoped that this initiative will help bring the issue of Knowledge for Development under greater public scrutiny and be picked up by opinion leaders and decision-makers.

A set of KDGs is in no way meant to challenge, let alone replace the UN’s SDGs or any other governing body’s development programme for that matter. A series of goals based on the principle of knowledge as the guiding principle of development issues is, if anything, supportive and promotive of any pre-existing development agenda. By advocating the adoption of a knowledge framework into the agenda of leading development agencies such as the UN, we are essentially doing nothing more than honing their fundamental purpose, which is to better the lives of human beings in developing regions.

Leading figures representing different stakeholder groups such as governments, international organisations, NGOs, multilateral finance institutions, industry and academia along with a community of experts and practitioners from around the world will be invited to contribute their visions and ambitions to co-create a set of KDGs and an Agenda Knowledge for Development.

An interactive web portal will be created to publish these ideas and to foster a constructive discourse amongst opinion-leaders and other contributors. This will hopefully set the stage for an extraordinary summit event, with the preliminary date set for 14 October 2016, where the draft KDGs will be presented, reflected, deepened and fed into the Agenda Knowledge for Development. Representatives from all stakeholder groups will converge to partake in the inaugural event of a dynamic community that regularly follows up on and promotes the achievement of the KDGs. The conference will be concluded with the bestowal of an award recognising pioneers for their outstanding achievements in the field of Knowledge for Development. This award shall be presented on a regular basis in the future.

Following the event, we intend to publish the condensed results – the KDGs and the Agenda Knowledge for Development – in print (web publishing will be an ongoing activity). This will hopefully testify that the cause we preach is something more than just a figment of the imagination. It is a tangible undertaking—manifested in concrete proposals and an influential community standing behind it—that can be effectively and sustainably put into practise. Moreover, it has the potential to shape the future international development agenda and deserves to be taken seriously by global leaders as they face the growing development challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

If you are interested in learning more about this initiative or if you would like to lend your support, please contact Knowledge Management Austria (KMA) at [office@km-a.net](mailto:office@km-a.net) or visit our website under [www.km-a.net](http://www.km-a.net).

### **About the authors**

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