

# 12 Looking Forward

## Diffusing Innovations and Developing Communities With Respect, Dignity, and Justice

*Giselle Rampersad, Fay Patel, Prahalad Sooknanan, and Anuradha Mundkur*

### INTRODUCTION

The rich, vibrant discourse in this book is presented as a point of departure for exploring new and different dimensions to the diffusion of innovations and international development in the 21st century. We share our thoughts on ways in which to be pro-active in the future. In looking forward, we offer suggestions and proposals for enhancing diffusion and international development portfolios and agendas. We invite readers to review our critical perspectives in an attempt to understand our diverse viewpoints and to look through our multifaceted lens. Readers are encouraged to explore, investigate, interrogate, and contest the socio-economic and political landscape on which we want to build our collective dream for a global community founded on the principles of social justice and human rights.

One cannot advocate justice if one has not taken responsibility for providing an environment in which fellow human beings are treated in a just manner. Justice can only be served if one uses the means one has to make a difference to the quality of life of those who are oppressed. We can serve the cause of justice by speaking against injustice, by defending ourselves against those who commit an unjust act upon us, by disapproving an unjust act, by writing about an injustice and exposing it, by thinking about challenging an injustice, or by responding with compassion to those who confront an injustice. Our silence and inability to act locates us with the perpetrators as accomplices of the crime against humanity. As Paulo Freire (1985, p.122) said, ‘Washing one’s hands of[f] the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral’.

### MOVING AWAY FROM A DEVELOPMENT PROJECT MINDSET

More significantly, the authors are informed by perspectives grounded in developing and developed community contexts. This is evident from the

authors' origins and life journeys (past and present) that stretch across several continents and countries: the United States, Canada, England, New Zealand, Australia, China, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, South Africa, Brazil, and Trinidad and Tobago. It is therefore not surprising that we define ourselves as citizens of the world in an international space where we challenge technological, social, economic, and environmental borders. On account of this awareness, we underscore the need to move beyond the notion of technology transfer from the developed community to developing community contexts. According to McMichael (2004, p. 45) 'not only has the [World] Bank sponsored Western technological transfer, but it has established an institutional presence in Third World countries'. In essence, the editors advocate for a rejection of the notion of the 'development project' and 'the globalization project' (McMichael, 2004, p. xxxix) mindset that has grossly overshadowed the discourse. Within the project paradigm, human development was ignored and underplayed; a missionary zeal overtook the altruistic goal; and the people within the projects were treated as possessions and products to be bartered, exchanged, subjugated, and colonized over and over and over again. The co-editors of the book are all products and victims of 'Third World' projects in the 1970s to 1990s. *Projects* holds a negative connotation because people from 'the projects' are usually impoverished, illiterate, and unable to contribute to mainstream life in a meaningful way. They were in 'the project' that was imposed as part of Western development initiatives, and they remain labeled as being from 'the projects' as a form of branding and as a declaration of their identity. 'The projects' defines who they are, their value, their role, and their potential to make informed decisions about their own lives. The *project* label became a brand name for various politically and economically motivated agendas where whole nations were brought into the fold on the understanding that their emotional and physical well-being and their right to an equitable and sustainable future were the ultimate goal. It is important to note that *projects* continue to be flavored in the Bretton Woods project mold of the early 1940s where the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were conceived to promote rising living standards on a global scale. Of the 44 nations attending Bretton Woods, 27 were from the Third World (McMichael, 2004, p.45).

## INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT: AT WHAT PRICE?

'Third World' *projects* such as Bretton Woods remain an important aspect of the current reshuffled loan scheme that resumes the traditional master-servant relationship ensuring that the shackles are never removed from the slaves. The subjects will always return to their masters for more—more food, loans, industrial machinery, technologies—and they will always pay blood money in the form of human life in exchange for diamonds, oil, and water, among other natural resources.

Currently, international development debates continue to echo the colonial paradigms of the past century where decision makers base their summations of the developing community needs on hand-outs, social responsibility budgets, and deficit model biases. Consistent with our advocacy for quality social change, it is imperative that we move this discourse toward investment in the knowledge base, skills, and talents of global citizens in the developed and the developing community context to enable and empower them to sustain future growth and development. To this end, we argue that the renewed focus should be on innovation through human development governed by respect, social justice, and empowerment geared at bringing about sustainable and equitable economic growth with care for the environment. In other words, innovation can be complementary to achieving the goals of health, wellness, food security, energy security, and environmental sustainability. More importantly, innovation should be integrated in a harmonizing manner to secure a sustainable and dignified future for all people. Any form of bonded development is no longer negotiable.

In looking forward, this book brings forth a message of renewed hope to stand firm against all forms of bondedness even when it is cleverly disguised and crafted within *isms* and *izations*: industrialization, technologization, globalization, and imperialism. Throughout the book, forward-looking perspectives are reiterated and reinforced by the authors about reframing and reordering innovation and development discourse to include human development and compassion, harmonizing the manner in which priorities are set and negotiated to achieve the sustainable futures of developing communities. Such harmonization and negotiation must enforce the principles of social responsibility and justice. The process must entrench values of respect and dignity for human life as the fundamental departure point.

The chapters are complex and diverse; however, they focus on the importance of engaging ‘other’ worldviews that are embedded within unique but valuable cultural knowledge. Further, the authors give voice to histories and identities that have been eroded through the selfish and greedy agendas of hegemonic forces. The perspectives shared in the book highlight the vulnerability of human beings who sacrifice lives, families, lands, and natural resources on an increasing basis in the name of freedom, in exchange for food, and in the hope that their dignities will not be harmed.

**Part I** of the book brought different perspectives on innovation diffusion and international development. **Part II** focused on the impact of innovation and development agendas on developing communities, and **Part III** untangled the web around hunger, poverty, and land dispossessions.

## LOOKING FORWARD

Today, a new era for innovation is apparent as the world witnesses a redistribution of wealth and power and a challenge to traditional notions of

development and innovation diffusion. Recent events in 2011, such as the Occupy Movement, the Arab Spring and the impact of emerging new mobile technologies are evident of a new era of social change driven by an impassioned global citizenry. Developed and developing communities will continue to challenge injustice with an unparalleled aggression. It is in this regard that innovative solutions are critical in addressing global issues, including environmental sustainability, energy security, food security, poverty, and health and wellness for international development in the 21st century. To this end, suggestions and proposals are presented for further exploration, investigation, and critical review. Most importantly, these suggestions should be assessed against the needs and demands of developing communities and in consultation with them to ascertain whether their contexts will withstand the pressures and force of innovative interventions.

### PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE INNOVATION AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Finally, it is important to note that this book extends and balances the innovation discourse by adding harmonizing voices of those from both developing and developed communities. In this regard, it is hoped that scholars, consultants, and practitioners of information technology, mass communication, and international development and innovation will be better prepared and informed about their humanitarian roles and responsibilities and about the rights of the developing communities among whom they work. Future innovation and international development initiatives and goals must be aligned to a commitment to the quality of human life and sustainable development among developing communities.

In all chapters, authors have included various proposals, thoughts, and ideas to enhance the quality of life for all by engaging the basic principles of human rights and by establishing a commitment to a sustainable future. The proposals outlined below are possible options for future collaboration and negotiation on innovation diffusion and international development design and implementation in future decades. Of course, it is imperative that the communities who will embrace these initiatives are consulted and their needs and sustainable development priorities remain foremost considerations. Authors offer the following proposals for consideration:

- Proposal 1: Redress the injustices of modernity through the revitalization of a social justice consciousness.
- Proposal 2: Embed the principles of social responsibility, justice, and sustainability within diffusion of innovations and international development initiatives.
- Proposal 3: Adopt a holistic approach to building and sustaining innovative capacity that incorporates institutional, organizational, and individual factors.

- Proposal 4: Advocate for the integration of mainstream and development news as alternative development journalism.
- Proposal 5: Renegotiate gendered spaces to diffuse technology equitably by protecting the rights of all stakeholders.
- Proposal 6: Utilize entertainment-education (E-E) effectively to enhance the quality of life among developing communities.
- Proposal 7: Increase the acceptance levels of SMS-based e-government services by utilizing beliefs and influences as significant factors to enhance the use of services.
- Proposal 8: Seek greater transparency and accountability from all stakeholders in the implementation of e-governance systems.
- Proposal 9: Investigate and apply innovative solutions to foster food security.
- Proposal 10: Address environmental considerations in building energy security effectively.
- Proposal 11: Encourage and facilitate Indigenous community storytelling about Indigenous land use and occupancy while resisting hyper colonial forms.
- Proposal 12: Infuse current and future innovative diffusion and international development design and practice with respect, dignity, and justice.

## CONCLUSION

The 21st century will bring new challenges for both developing and developed communities around the world. Practitioners and advocates of diffusion of innovations and international development will have to tread carefully around the minefield of various complex global concerns that include climate change, political upheaval, the containment of infectious diseases, religious and ethnic wars, and economic instability.

It is important to approach the diffusion of innovations and international development initiatives from an informed perspective that recognizes and respects the rights of all human beings to a decent quality of life. The diverse range of cultural knowledge, deeply embedded value and belief systems, and the dignity of all human beings must be respected. Innovative approaches should be explored, especially with the goal of finding ways in which developing and developed communities can continue to live in harmony.

## REFERENCES

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