

KNOWLEDGE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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The relationship between knowledge, development and international cooperation is the main theme of this first issue of *Universitas Forum*, which is being launched in the midst of what can be considered a crisis of the development model that has dominated development thinking over the past fifty years. But this model, generally associated with globalization and finance-dominated capitalism, is linked to competition for the benefit of some to the detriment of others, provoking social exclusion and, in many cases, even violence. Several authors published here indicate that an alternative model is gaining ground in contemporary development thinking and practice, based on enhancing endogenous resources of local communities and their human development potential.

It is also a moment of serious reflection about the prevailing modalities of international aid and their capacity to contribute in a significant way to resolving structural inequalities and to achieving the global objectives of human development outlined in the UN Millennium Declaration. A new relationship between Northern and Southern actors is being called for, one based on mutual respect and learning and on a vision of co-development and co-construction of development knowledge. After some fifty years of international development cooperation, new ways of doing things are being sought.

Part and parcel of this rethinking process is the relationship between knowledge and development policies. In particular, it is about the *kind* of knowledge required both to meet the human development agenda and to inform the practice of international cooperation in that direction. Unfortunately, much existing knowledge excludes that of many potentially innovative experiences because these have not been adequately documented, systematized and disseminated. Where does existing knowledge come from? Is the knowledge of Southern communities and experiences sufficiently taken into consideration? Are there barriers to including knowledge from the South and if so, what role should be played by organizations involved in international cooperation and by universities and research institutions in the North? Universities and research institutions in the South and the North are being called upon to rise to this challenge, as are the institutions of international development cooperation.

The editors' intention, with the creation of *Universitas Forum*, is to contribute to these debates, drawing on the experiences of the many actors in numerous countries involved in the UN's ART Initiative, of which the Universitas programme is a part. These actors include professionals working in local and national governments, public and private institutions, local communities, civil society organizations, United Nations organizations, as well as researchers in universities and research institutes in the North and in the South. Over several years, many of these actors have developed a wealth of knowledge and experience that could contribute constructively and critically to these debates. They have experimented with tools to enhance aid effectiveness, based on a territorial approach in which local communities, with their institutions of governance, their history, culture and forms of knowledge are the main protagonists.

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Much of this experience, however, has not been documented or disseminated. *Universitas Forum* encourages the systematisation of these experiences, but **also** those of other researchers, policy makers or practitioners who are not associated with the ART Initiative. We are interested in successful experiences, approaches and methodologies, but also the critical conceptualizations of these. Contributions from researchers and practitioners in the South are particularly welcome. So please write to us with your ideas and experiences. We look forward to hearing from you!

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