SMART
GLOBAL
DEVELOPMENT

Conference Outcomes Report

Exploring the role of **higher education**
in advancing sustainable
development goals

Higher education institutions in the Global South have tremendous potential to contribute directly and substantively to sustainable improvements in quality of life, inclusive economic growth, and good governance — but they require renewed attention and the right kinds of global financial and intellectual support to do so.

Contents

Executive Summary

In April 2016, Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC), Academics Without Borders (AWB), and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) — with financial support from the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada — convened the **Smart Global Development** conference at the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat in Ottawa.

The conference partners began with the premise that higher education institutions in the Global South have tremendous potential to contribute directly and substantively to sustainable improvements in quality of life, inclusive economic growth, and good governance, but they require renewed attention and the right kinds of global financial and intellectual support to do so. The response to the conference, and the range of global experience illuminated through its 14 sessions, validated that premise.

Some 238 global thought leaders, policymakers, and practitioners from 20 countries participated in the conference, including representatives from governments, civil society organizations, academia, business, and the media. Another 115 individuals joined the live webcast of the keynote and plenary sessions. In their keynote addresses on day one and day two of the conference respectively, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, and the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Canada's Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, set the stage for thoughtful dialogue on the intersections between higher education and global development. Keynote and plenary sessions are available through a video archive.

Four objectives informed the conference program:

- Examine the critical role of higher education institutions in advancing sustainable, inclusive social and economic development in the Global South

- Explore the larger role that universities play in fostering leaders, change agents, and informed citizens so as to strengthen governance, social justice, culture, and inclusive economic growth

- Review the range of approaches to building higher education capacity in the Global South

- Assess current efforts to gather evidence of the development impact of investments in higher education

Over the course of the conference, several recurrent themes and recommendations emerged for the global community to consider as priorities for advancing higher education in support of development aims:

1. Higher Education and Development Innovation

Higher education institutions can play an integral role in fostering development innovation by finding creative ways to improve quality of life and build more inclusive, compassionate societies. We require new approaches, partnerships and resources, however, to encourage, measure and evaluate innovation in that context.

We must look at a wider higher education ecosystem — including think tanks and post-secondary vocational and technical institutions — that promotes knowledge creation and capacity building in collaboration with international organizations, donors, non-governmental organizations, universities, political parties, private associations, business, state, and media.

14	**238**	**20**	**115**
conference sessions	conference participants	countries represented	webcast participants

STEM education and research are critical to advancing the SDGs globally. Innovation, scientific discoveries, and technological advances come through robust connections to global knowledge networks — but access to global fora and networking opportunities remains a barrier for young scientists, scholars, and professionals from the Global South.

2. Inclusivity, Community Engagement, and Social Accountability

As the Governor General observed, Canada's own experience in building strong, inclusive institutions — including learning institutions — is an ongoing, "learning in action" process, notably with regard to aboriginal education. While there is no single way to foster inclusivity, two keys to success are leadership and community engagement.

Higher education institutions have an essential role to play in creating inclusive and safe spaces for dialogue, critique, and debate that incorporate diverse voices and perspectives — and break down barriers for women, youth, and marginalized communities.

His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada.

For higher education institutions to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development, they must reach outside the classroom and actively engage with communities. The concept of social accountability can help define the role of higher education institutions within the communities in which they are situated. With social accountability, the university or college explicitly commits to social accountability in its mandate — focusing its educational and research efforts to address priority needs of the community.

3. Quality Matters

Minister Bibeau lauded the shift within the Sustainable Development Goals to a focus on quality education, not just access. Strategies for bridging the divide between quality and access (or scale) featured throughout the conference, including leveraging the complementary roles of public and private institutions; harnessing the potential of open education resources; and adopting new approaches to Quality Assurance to encourage innovation and ensure local relevance.

4. Higher Education Opportunities in Conflict Zones and Fragile States

Humanitarian aid does not prioritize education, and the assistance given to that sector largely excludes higher education initiatives. Universities and colleges must respond to this challenge with innovative approaches that enable refugees and vulnerable communities to continue on their educational paths. As important as the focus on higher education opportunities for women and girls is, we cannot increase their access at the expense of young men and boys, particularly in fragile states and conflict-affected communities.

5. The Education Continuum

To harness fully the potential of higher education in support of sustainable global development, we must take a wider view of tertiary education as a system that extends beyond universities. Providers of vocational, technical, and professional education — colleges, polytechnics, and similar institutions — are integral players in that system and in every successful economy and society around the world. Higher education institutions cannot work in isolation: cooperation and coordination across the spectrum is essential to provide countries with the skilled human resources, informed leadership, and expertise to find lasting development solutions.

The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Canada's Minister of International Development and La Francophonie.

We must also resist placing tertiary education in competition with primary and secondary education for resources and support. In reality, higher education institutions have an integral role to play in strengthening education systems across the continuum; development strategies, programming, and policies should build upon that integral connection.

6. Higher Education as a Long-term Investment in Local Institutions

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires permanent, local institutional capacities and leadership. Building strong, sustainable institutions is a generational endeavour and requires expanded timelines and a shift in expectations around demonstrating short-term results for investments in higher education. It also requires the right kinds of financial and intellectual support: Investing in administrative capacities, systems, and processes is essential for those institutions to contribute fully to their students and their societies.

7. Demonstrating Impact

To measure the impact of higher education on sustainable development, we must change both terminology and approaches to monitoring and evaluation. "Development impact" usually implies a large scale, sustainable change in the well-being of a population and its environment. Because developmental change depends on a confluence of actors and factors, the focus should shift to evaluating contribution — rather than attribution.

Similarly, the emphasis in current approaches on short-term, immediate outcomes obscures the long-term nature of higher education's critical role in advancing and sustaining development. Given the long-term nature of investments in higher education, a shift toward intermediary outcomes — coupled with some short-term metrics — may help better predict success over the longterm.

Continuing the Smart Global Development Conversation

Conference delegates emphasized the need for sustained engagement on these sets of issues and identified the following questions as a potential framework for continuing that conversation:

- How can universities and colleges in the Global South engage more directly in the social and economic development of the communities in which they are situated, and what additional capacity might be necessary for them to do so?

- How can higher education institutions more effectively and deliberately advance women's empowerment and gender equality — and break down the gendered barriers to participation?

- What can higher education institutions do to provide refugees and youth in conflict-affected or fragile areas with post-secondary learning and vocational opportunities?

- How should higher education institutions define and ensure quality, particularly in view of the tensions between quality and access or scale?

- What methodologies, tools, or approaches could strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and learning around the results of investments in higher education in support of development aims?

- How can institutions in the Global South strengthen access to relevant, high-quality vocational, technical, and professional education? How might they harness the global experience and expertise of colleges and polytechnic institutes to build capacities and implement programs?

- What is the case for investing in private higher education institutions in the Global South? How can private institutions help strengthen educational quality, relevance, and capacities within public institutions?

- What kinds of support and resources do higher education institutions in the Global South require to contribute more directly to improvements in primary and secondary education systems in their operating contexts?

- What types of public policies or reforms would create a more enabling environment for innovation, quality, and relevance within higher education institutions in the Global South?

- What are the appropriate funding mechanisms to support the various types of investments required for strong, vibrant, and relevant higher education institutions in the Global South?

Higher education is an investment in the future, in creating the expertise, resources, and leadership all societies require to achieve and sustain the Global Goals. Such investments in the higher education space require patience: they are generational endeavours. At the same time, the fragilities we encounter across the globe today are so severe that we urgently require vibrant institutions of higher education to anchor progress and serve as bulwarks against instability. While these concluding questions offer a road map for continued engagement, we must continue to make very thoughtful and smart investments in higher education to advance sustainable global development.

Smart Global Development?
Higher Education within a Global Development Agenda

Across the world, universities play an integral role in the social, economic, political, and cultural life of countries. They foster future leaders and professionals. They develop an informed and engaged citizenry that provides the foundation for democratic participation and good governance. Universities are drivers of social and economic development, repositories of cultural heritage, research centres for expanding human knowledge, and innovation hubs. They are institutions that enable countries to participate in global conversations on the most pressing issues facing our world.

In the Global South, the potential for universities to contribute directly and substantively to improved development, growth, and governance outcomes is arguably greatest. Access to quality higher education opportunities is essential to foster future leaders in sectors critical to growth and development; to advance policymaking and practice; and to address challenges particular to developing and emerging economies.

Despite that potential, higher education in the Global South has received comparatively little attention and support from the global community over the past several decades — particularly in comparison to investments in primary education and basic health.

The adoption of the 2030 Development Agenda, comprising 17 Sustainable Development Goals, by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015, provides an opportunity to reconsider the role of higher education in advancing these shared development aims at the local and global levels. In a marked change from the Millennium Development Goals, which focused exclusively on primary education, Global Goal 4: Quality Education explicitly addresses access to all forms of quality tertiary education, most notably in Target 4.3: "By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university."[1]

> *Access to quality higher education opportunities is essential to foster future leaders in sectors critical to growth and development…*

To seize that opportunity, the Smart Global Development conference brought together international experts, thought leaders, policymakers, and practitioners for conversation and debate on strengthening the capacities of higher education institutions in the Global South to tackle critical development challenges. In their keynote addresses on the first and second days of the conference respectively, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, and the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Canada's Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, set the stage for thoughtful dialogue on the intersections between higher education and global development.

This report highlights the notable observations, lessons, and recommendations from the conference deliberations. It also encapsulates reflections from young global scholars gathered prior to the conference; and proposes a framework for continued discussion on how to integrate higher education more effectively into development policies, program design, and evaluation.

1. United Nations, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform.

The Smart Global Development Conference

On April 13-14, 2016, Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC), Academics Without Borders (AWB), and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) convened the Smart Global Development conference at the Delegation of the Ismaili Imamat in Ottawa.

The Government of Canada, through Global Affairs Canada, provided financial support for the conference.

Conference Objectives

The conference began with the premise that higher education institutions in the Global South have tremendous potential to contribute to sustainable, inclusive social and economic development. Through fourteen sessions featuring global perspectives, experiences and case studies, the conference sought to identify resources available to build capacities of universities in developing and emerging economies; and identify the best policies, practices and tools to do so.

Four objectives informed the conference program:

- Examine the critical role of higher education institutions in advancing sustainable, inclusive social and economic development in the Global South

- Explore the larger role that universities play in fostering leaders, change agents, and informed citizens so as to strengthen governance, social justice, culture, and inclusive economic growth

- Review the range of approaches to building higher education capacity in the Global South

- Assess current efforts to gather evidence of the development impact of investments in higher education

...higher education institutions in the Global South have tremendous potential to contribute to sustainable, inclusive social and economic development.

Conference Participants

The Smart Global Development Conference gathered some 238 speakers and participants from around the world (137 women, 101 men), with another 115 individuals (66 women, 49 men) joining the live webcast of the keynote and plenary sessions. Delegates came from 20 countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, North and South America — and included representatives from governments, civil society organizations, academia, the private sector, and the media.

Participants by sector

238

- Academia — 38%
- Civil society — 36%
- Government — 13%
- Private sector — 13%
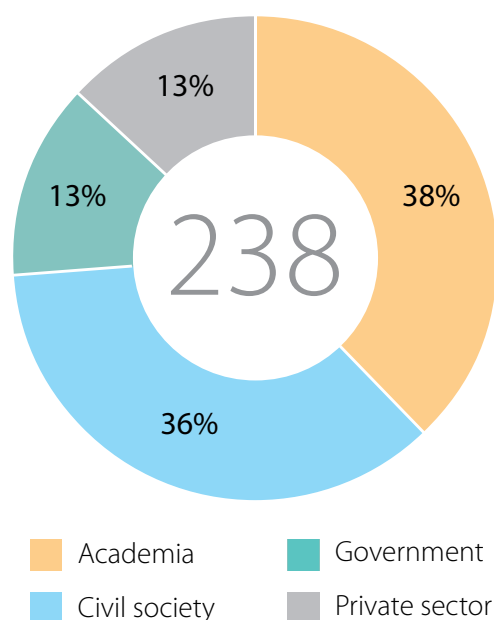
Within academia, senior officials, faculty and students from 30 higher education institutions participated in the conference — including 19 Canadian universities and colleges. Special student registration fees and the opportunity to volunteer as student rapporteurs attracted thirty young scholars to the conference.

Program at a Glance

All keynote and plenary sessions were webcast and are available through a video archive.

DAY ONE | APRIL 13, 2016

Webcasts: all day one sessions may be viewed here.

Welcome and Introductions

- Khalil Z. Shariff, Chief Executive Officer, Aga Khan Foundation Canada

- Jean Lebel, President, International Development Research Centre

OPENING KEYNOTE ADDRESS:
Smart Global Development Conference

His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada

KEYNOTE CONVERSATION:
Unleashing the Power of Universities

- Eva Egron-Polak, Secretary General and Executive Director, International Association of Universities

- Leonard Wantchekon, Professor of Politics, Princeton University; Founder, the African School of Economics, Benin

- Reeta Roy, President and CEO, The MasterCard Foundation

- Moderator: Greg Moran, Director of Special Projects, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario; Former Provost, Aga Khan University; Provost Emeritus, Western University

DAY TWO | APRIL 14, 2016

Webcasts: Opening keynote address and Plenary 1 | Plenary 2 | Plenary 3.

Welcome and Introductions

- Mahmoud Eboo, Diplomatic Representative of His Highness the Aga Khan to Canada, Aga Khan Development Network

- Firoz Rasul, President, Aga Khan University

OPENING KEYNOTE ADDRESS:
Higher Education within a Global Development Agenda

The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of International Development and La Francophonie

PLENARY 1:
Smart Global Connections

- Anna Glass, Managing Editor, International Journal of African Higher Education

- Firoz Rasul, President, Aga Khan University

- Orazio Bellettini, Founder and Executive Director, FARO Group, Ecuador

- Samuel Pierre, Professor, École polytechnique de Montréal

- Moderator: Paul Davidson, President and CEO, Universities Canada

PARALLEL SESSION 1A:
Teaching & Pedagogy

- Arshad Ahmad, Associate Vice President, Teaching and Learning, McMaster University; Director, McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning

- Patricia B. Arinto, Dean and Professor (Distance Education & e-Learning), Faculty of Education, University of the Philippines – Open University

- Session Chair: Pierre Jury, Editorial Page Editor, Le Droit

PARALLEL SESSION 1B:
Research into Action

- K. Srinath Reddy, President, Public Health Foundation of India and World Heart Foundation (in abstentia)

- Noni MacDonald, Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Dalhousie University; Co-founder, MicroResearch

- Zulfiqar Bhutta, Co-Director, Director of Research, Centre for Global Child Health, the Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto; Founding Director of the Center of Excellence in Women and Child Health, Aga Khan University

- Session Chair: Céline Cooper, Columnist, Montreal Gazette

PARALLEL SESSION 1C:
Community Engagement

- Emily Antze, Programs Administrator, Borderless Higher Education for Refugees, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University

- Enriqueta Reston, Associate Professor, Science and Mathematics Education Department, University of San Carlos, Philippines

- Wendy Harris, President and CEO, Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO)

- Session Chair: Manon Cornellier, Editorialist, Le Devoir

LUNCH & LEARN:
A University on the Roof of the World

- David Agnew, President, Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology

- Mahmoud Eboo, Diplomatic Representative of His Highness the Aga Khan to Canada, Aga Khan Development Network

- Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Executive Chairman, Board Executive Committee, University of Central Asia

LUNCH & LEARN:
The Experience of a Non-profit Teaching Hospital in Northern Uganda

- Dominique Corti, Chair, Fondazione Piero e Lucille Corti, Italy; Honorary President, Teasdale-Corti Foundation, Canada

PLENARY 2:
Smart Global Approaches

- Barbara O. Schneeman, Higher Education Coordinator, United States Agency for International Development

- Steven Davis, Executive Director, Academics Without Borders

- Thierry Zomahoun, President and CEO, African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) Global Secretariat

- Moderator: David Agnew, President, Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology

PARALLEL SESSION 2A:
Demonstrating Impact

- Terry Smutylo, Senior Evaluation Specialist and Founder, Evaluation Unit at the International Development Research Centre

- Tricia Wind, Senior Program Specialist, International Development Research Centre

- Session Chair: Pierre Jury, Editorial Page Editor, Le Droit

PARALLEL SESSION 2B:
Quality Assurance

- Greg Moran, Director of Special Projects, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario; Former Provost, Aga Khan University; and Provost Emeritus, Western University

- Tashmin Khamis, Director, Aga Khan University Network of Quality Assurance and Improvement; President, The East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Network

- Session Chair: Céline Cooper, Columnist, Montreal Gazette

PARALLEL SESSION 2C:
Building Strong, Sustainable Universities

- Paul Davenport, Chair, Board of Governors, University of Rwanda; Former President, Western University and University of Alberta

- Robin Farquhar, President Emeritus, University of Winnipeg; Former President and Vice-Chancellor of Carleton University

- Session Chair: Manon Cornellier, Editorialist, Le Devoir

PLENARY 3:
Smart Global Investments

- Barbara O. Schneeman, Higher Education Coordinator, United States Agency for International Development

- Jean Lebel, President, International Development Research Centre

- Jeffrey Waite, Advisor, Education Global Practice, The World Bank

- Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Executive Chairman, Board Executive Committee, University of Central Asia

- Moderator: Eva Egron-Polak, Secretary General and Executive Director, International Association of Universities

Closing Remarks

- Khalil Z. Shariff, Chief Executive Officer, Aga Khan Foundation Canada

DAY ONE | APRIL 13, 2016

Smart Global Development Conference

HIS EXCELLENCY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE DAVID JOHNSTON
Governor General of Canada

Description

Inclusivity, Innovation, Diplomacy. With these three words, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, issued a challenge to participants gathered for the opening of the Smart Global Development conference. The Governor General inspired the audience to tackle key questions of higher education and its role in advancing sustainable, inclusive development by highlighting efforts in Canada and globally, and reflecting on the role of partnerships in underwriting transformative change.

Lessons, Recommendations, and Key Observations

- Canada's own experience in building strong, inclusive institutions — including learning institutions — is an ongoing, "learning in action" process, notably with regard to aboriginal education. While there is no single way to foster inclusivity, two keys to success are leadership and community engagement.

- As hubs of innovation and creativity, institutions of higher education are ideally positioned to contribute to sustainable development by finding creative ways to meaningfully improve quality of life and build a more inclusive, compassionate society.

- The diplomacy of knowledge — the process by which distinct peoples and cultures come together and improve lives by sharing knowledge across borders and disciplines — speaks to the importance of international collaboration between institutions of higher education to address development challenges.

- For further reflection:
  - What does university innovation in support of global development look like?
  - Given the existing barriers that prevent higher education institutions in the Global South from harnessing their creative potential, how do we allow that innate creativity to flourish?
  - How can your organization make a unique contribution to a better world through knowledge diplomacy?

KEYNOTE CONVERSATION:

Unleashing the Power of Universities

Eva Egron-Polak
Secretary General and Executive Director, International Association of Universities

Leonard Wantchekon
Professor of Politics, Princeton University; Founder, the African School of Economics, Benin

Reeta Roy
President and CEO, The MasterCard Foundation

Moderator: Greg Moran
Director of Special Projects, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario; Former Provost, Aga Khan University; Provost Emeritus, Western University

Description

Access to quality higher education opportunities in the Global South is essential to foster future leaders in sectors critical to growth and development; to build an informed and engaged citizenry; to advance policymaking and practice; and to address challenges particular to developing and emerging economies. This panel of global thinkers addressed the question: How do we unleash that potential in support of global development aims?

Their wide-ranging conversation touched on the role of universities in the education of ethical leaders; higher education and the Sustainable Development Goals; internationalization and the issue of "brain drain"; and the value of strengthening connections between higher education institutions and the private sector, civil society, and communities.

Following an exchange between the panelists and the audience, the Governor General offered some final thoughts on the evening's deliberations.

Lessons, Recommendations, and Key Observations

- Higher education institutions have an essential role to play as "safe spaces" for civil, respectful dialogue, critique, and debate that can uncover new ways of doing things by bringing diverse perspectives and experiences together. At the same time, some level of discomfort — a healthy tension — is necessary to push individuals to think outside the box.

We set unrealistic timelines and underestimate the complexity of development, both in terms of building the capacities of universities and in addressing issues of poverty and other challenges.

- The lack of local research capacities with strong institutional backing to collect and analyze data limit our ability to tackle poverty alleviation. African higher education institutions have identified this as a top priority. International partnerships can play a role in strengthening those capacities, with care taken to avoid the imposition of Western models of knowledge and, in the African context, to redress the dearth of African researchers represented in published studies on development in Africa.

- The transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is especially significant for higher education institutions, not only through their inclusion in Global Goal 4. Achieving all the SDGs — and ensuring sustainability over time — requires permanent, local institutional capacities and leadership.

- We set unrealistic timelines and underestimate the complexity of development, both in terms of building the capacities of universities and in addressing issues of poverty and other challenges. We need to shift our thinking from short-term project cycles to longer-term investments.

- Within the wider context of internationalization, the issue of "brain drain" is significant, both out of the country or region and, for universities in the Global South, out of academia. We cannot paper over this as "brain circulation": it is nearly always one-way. Addressing this issue requires efforts on several fronts:
  - Building or strengthening local institutions in those regions to provide the opportunities for individuals to work in their areas of expertise in meaningful ways;
  - For international student scholarship and exchange programs, reinforce the aspirations of leadership and service to community; keep the timeline for return open; and reinforce connections through summer internships/research projects or support for a yearly visit home;

Keynote Conversation: Unleashing the Power of Universities.

  - Expand the ways in which the diaspora can engage in the development work of higher education institutions through joint research and appointments, without adversely affecting the roles and security of their local counterparts.

- For higher education institutions to contribute meaningfully to sustainable development, they must reach outside the classroom and engage with communities and the private sector. In both instances, these institutions must do a better job of understanding the problems industries and communities are trying to solve.

- For further reflection:
  - How do we create the "safe spaces" within higher education institutions that can foster an environment where individuals are comfortable enough to negotiate difference and challenge existing ways of doing things?
  - How do we ensure that women are included?

- What is the pipeline of talent required for industries and sectors operating in largely informal economies — or undergoing privatization?

- How do universities shift their relationship with local communities from one in which information is extracted but never returned, to a partnership that harnesses local knowledge and resources to solve real-life problems?

- How do we measure the impact of increased access to higher education opportunities?

DAY TWO: April 14, 2016

Higher Education within a Global Development Agenda

THE HONOURABLE MARIE-CLAUDE BIBEAU
Minister of International Development
and La Francophonie

Description

As Canada and the wider global community determine how to support the Sustainable Development Goals and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Minister Bibeau highlighted the place of inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities in meeting those shared objectives. The minister lauded the shift within the SDGs to a focus on quality education, not just access, and urged conference delegates to reflect on how to support educational opportunities in conflict zones and fragile states, and how break down barriers and broaden opportunities for women and youth.

Lessons, Recommendations, and Key Observations

- Inclusive, equitable, quality education and life-long learning opportunities for all will require bold, innovative solutions. Governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector each have a role to play in opening the door to higher education opportunities.

- Given finite resources, new approaches to strengthen access to quality higher education must catalyze private sector investment and include new metrics to encourage, measure and evaluate innovation in our policies, partnerships and programming.

> *Higher education institutions advance development through research, monitoring, and impact assessment — as well as by engaging with communities.*

- Lifelong learning opportunities — including equal access to quality vocational training, distance learning and higher education — are vital for developing countries to engage in the global knowledge economy.

- Half of the world's out-of-school children live in conflict zones and fragile states. Too many refugees globally have had their studies interrupted. Universities and colleges must respond to this challenge with innovative approaches — from teacher training that creates portable teaching capacities, to open source learning platforms, distance education, and low-cost mobile technologies, which can help youth continue on their educational path.

- Universities and colleges exist because they seek understanding, dialogue, and inquiry. These are essential to vibrant and peaceful societies.

- The fundamental mission of higher education institutions is to create the next generation of leaders, citizens, and change agents who can tackle the social, economic, political and environmental challenges facing their countries.

- Higher education institutions advance development through research, monitoring, and impact assessment — as well as by engaging with communities.

For further reflection:

- For all involved in higher education: we need to rethink how we design programs, and who is involved in their design and implementation.

- How can we break down silos between institutions and practitioners to better facilitate lifelong learning?

PLENARY 1:

Smart Global Connections

Anna Glass
Managing Editor, International Journal of African Higher Education

Firoz Rasul
President, Aga Khan University

Orazio Bellettini
Founder and Executive Director, FARO Group, Ecuador

Samuel Pierre
Professor, École polytechnique de Montréal

Moderator: Paul Davidson
President and CEO, Universities Canada

Description

Drawing on their experience with higher education institutions in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada, the panel explored the ways in which higher education institutions in the Global South contribute to sustainable, inclusive social and economic development. What are the current barriers that prevent those institutions from effectively addressing key development challenges? What are some solutions that will allow us to overcome those barriers?

Lessons, Recommendations, and Key Observations

- For higher education to contribute to sustainable development, we must recognize that its principal objective should not be to convey content but to develop qualities of mind, critical thinking and values. Accordingly, higher education outcomes have a much longer timeline than labour market needs.

- When we speak of the role of higher education institutions in creating work-ready graduates, we should think of "employability" less in terms of specialized knowledge or skills than of flexibility.

The most effective way to address social, economic, and environmental challenges is to enhance societies' capacities to collaborate in the production, dissemination and use of knowledge.

■ A key barrier that prevents universities from contributing effectively to development in many contexts is the fragility, or inconsistency, of their regulatory and operating environments. We cannot overlook the need for strong policies and frameworks, freedom from corruption or political interference, secure spaces for dialogue and critique, and sufficient resources to attract and retain students and faculty.

■ The very presence of a higher education institution provides significant social, cultural, and economic benefits that extend well beyond the knowledge and skills of its graduates or the number of individuals it employs. We have many studies that quantify and assess these benefits for university campuses in Canada and elsewhere in the Global North, but few comparable efforts to do so within the context of development policy and planning in the Global South.

■ A key challenge is the state of research capacity in developing countries. This leads in many instances to unequal partnerships between higher education institutions in the Global North and the Global South. How do we address those inequalities?

  - How do we ensure that the knowledge generated by higher education institutions ultimately benefits the communities implicated in the research? How are researchers from local or foreign institutions accountable to those communities?

■ The elites in developing countries are often ill equipped to address development challenges because their higher education takes place abroad, in Europe or North America. The problem extends beyond "brain drain"; even when those elite students return home, their higher education experience has not prepared them to address the development needs (and opportunities) in their country.

■ The wealth and well-being of societies increasingly depend on their ability to produce, distribute, and exploit knowledge: this is what the "knowledge economy" means. Universities cannot solve development challenges alone: The most effective way to address social, economic, and environmental challenges is to enhance societies' capacities to collaborate in the production, dissemination and use of knowledge.

  - We must look at a wider higher education ecosystem — which includes think tanks and post-secondary vocational and technical institutions — that promotes knowledge creation and capacity building with international organizations, donors, non-governmental organizations, universities, political parties, private associations, business, state, and media.

  - Within that ecosystem, universities can play an important role, but to do so we must complement the discipline-centred university model with a challenge-driven university model in which students use a more interdisciplinary approach to solve programs – working with organizations in other sectors.

■ Two concepts may be useful to connect the role of higher education institutions within the communities in which they are situated. The first concept is social accountability, in which the university explicitly commits to social accountability in its mandate — dedicating its educational and

research efforts to priority needs of the community. The second is alternative international standards, which focus the assessment of graduates on whether they possess the relevant knowledge, skills, and commitment to serve the community.

- Social accountability is a real issue. A survey in Latin America found that universities ranked very low in terms of community trust in institutions, because of the opacity of their work and the perception that they serve only the elite and do not give back what they take from the community (knowledge).

- When we talk about transparency of institutions, we often think in terms of the financial transparency. Social accountability goes beyond this. One way to move beyond this is to look at the services that a higher education institution can provide to a community. If institutions can demonstrate the value of these services for the quality of life of the community, then the question of quality becomes easier to address, and issues of funding become easier to address.

Plenary 1: Smart Global Connections.

■ On the question of quality versus quantity (or access), frank discussion is particularly difficult in the Global South. It is hard for a government official or education minister to say anything but "the more students the better."

- Increasing understanding and support for the focus on quality has to start from a shared understanding, supported by evidence, of the outsized impact that even a few high-quality graduates can have on a sector or country.

- Online education, such as massive open online courses (MOOCs), and other new technologies offer great promise for strengthening higher education — notably in terms of access, but also for quality. That said, with online and technology-enhanced learning, two key challenges are particularly relevant to developing country contexts. First, faculty need to be ready to adopt a very different pedagogy, so institutions must

SMART GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

invest in their professional development. Students as well are not equipped to learn in this much more self-directed way and to succeed in the online environment. Second, in many contexts, reliable electricity and broadband are not available.

> *If higher education institutions focus exclusively on preparing the job seekers, who will prepare the job creators? What role do universities play in wealth creation?*

■ An example in one profession highlights another dimension of the quality issue: Africa suffers from a lack of engineering talent, a gap that rapid urbanization across the continent will only exacerbate. If we remain focused on quality — which is critical for the engineering field — how can we start to address this dearth?

  • Outmoded higher education policies pose a major obstacle in this regard. For example, some countries do not permit highly skilled professionals without PhDs to serve as "professors of practice" — an increasingly common role in universities in the Global North. As a result, students do not benefit from teachers with real-life, applied experience; they only learn theory.

■ We should not lose sight of Minister Bibeau's remarks on educational opportunities for youth in fragile or conflict-affected states and in refugee camps. As noted recently by UNESCO , humanitarian aid does not prioritize education, and the assistance given to that sector largely excludes higher education initiatives.

  • As important as the focus on higher education opportunities for women and girls is, we cannot increase their access at the expense of young men and boys, particularly in fragile states and conflict-affected communities.

■ For further reflection:

  • Industry demands "job-ready" graduates, but what is the role of the university or college in creating graduates ready to contribute more broadly to society? If higher education institutions focus exclusively on preparing the job seekers, who will prepare the job creators? What role do universities play in wealth creation?

  • What models or mechanisms of research support that exist in Canada or elsewhere might help us identify solutions for supporting research in the Global South?

  • While much of the discussion at the conference has focused on universities and youth, we must address the large populations of adults who have not had access to higher education opportunities. How can universities and colleges better provide lifelong learning or expanded access to higher education for adult learners?

PARALLEL SESSION 1A:
Teaching & Pedagogy

Arshad Ahmad
Associate Vice President, Teaching and Learning, McMaster University; Director, McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Patricia B. Arinto
Dean and Professor (Distance Education and e-Learning), Faculty of Education, University of the Philippines – Open University

Session Chair: Pierre Jury
Editorial Page Editor, Le Droit

Description

This session highlighted pedagogical approaches or innovations in teaching and learning relevant to the needs of universities in the Global South — and to the ability of those institutions to foster the transformative future leaders and change agents who

can contribute to social and economic development. In particular, the panel and audience drew upon experience with open education resources (OER) and massive open online courses (MOOCs).

Lessons, Recommendations, and Key Observations

■ Two questions help to frame the context and urgency for rethinking the pedagogical approaches and tools we use to expand access to quality higher education opportunities that are relevant to the development challenges facing societies in the Global South.

  ● What are the key educational gaps facing our world? Oxfam recently reported that some 85 individuals own more than the combined wealth of 2.75 billion people — or half of the world. The wealth gap connects with the education gap in the Global South. We must close the education gap in order to address social and economic inequalities. If we begin to frame these gaps in terms of educational opportunity, what can we do to resolve them?

  ● We have a treasure trove of theories and frameworks about the science of learning, but precious little translated for practitioners to use in the classroom. Why are we unable to translate findings from research into good, evidence-based practice?

■ Coursera claims to serve 18,000,000 learners and, like edX, its reach is continuing to grow.[2] These platforms are having significant impact on pedagogy, disrupting traditional teaching and learning. By participating in the design, development, and delivery of these open education resources, higher education institutions in the Global South have the opportunity to serve an expanded range of learners beyond the campus.

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2. Coursera is a venture-backed, for-profit, educational technology company that offers massive online open courses (MOOCs). Coursera works with universities and other organizations to make some of their courses – across a wide range of disciplines – available online. Established by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, edX is a non-profit MOOC provider and runs on open-source software.

- For developing countries, open education resources (OER) can be particularly beneficial. Not only are they more affordable and more accessible, but, done well, they can actually improve the quality of teaching and learning. OER have high potential because they can offer currency, relevance and range — but only if those resources are developed specifically for those contexts.

- Recent developments in open education, specifically OER and MOOCs, in the Philippines (and, by extension, to other countries that are part of a wider Research on Open Education

For open education resources and technology to expand access to quality educational opportunities that relate to local needs and development challenges, we need to foster and support champions within institutions in the Global South.

Resources for Development network) are bridging the education and translation gaps.

- As the experience in the Philippines has shown, OER and MOOCs have enabled universities to engage with members of the diaspora community — individual learners who wish to stay connected culturally or to develop or maintain knowledge and skills relevant to economic opportunities in their country of origin.

- For open education resources and technology to expand access to quality educational opportunities that relate to local needs and development challenges, we need to foster and support champions within institutions in the Global South. As noted elsewhere, integrating OER into higher education institutions requires different pedagogical approaches — and faculty can be resistant to change.

PARALLEL SESSION 1B:
Research into Action

K. Srinath Reddy
President, Public Health Foundation of India and World Heart Foundation (in abstentia)

Noni MacDonald
Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Dalhousie University; Co-founder, MicroResearch

Zulfiqar Bhutta
Co-Director, Director of Research, Centre for Global Child Health, the Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto; Founding Director of the Center of Excellence in Women and Child Health, Aga Khan University

Session Chair: Céline Cooper
Columnist, Montreal Gazette

Description

How can higher education institutions tackle the critical health challenges facing the Global South, applying new knowledge and breakthroughs to improve health outcomes at the regional, national, or community level? Three eminent researchers highlight a range of distinctive approaches through which academic centres are directly contributing to improved health outcomes in the societies in which they are situated.

Lessons, Recommendations, and Key Observations

- The purpose of public health research is to provide evidence-based, context-specific, resource-optimizing, culturally compatible, and equity-promoting recommendations for policy and practice. Within this context, the role of universities is crucial in both developing the knowledge and building the capacities to apply that knowledge to address health challenges. Universities can only contribute to change by being part of the solution. Highlighting problems will only take you so far.

- While university-led research contributed toward significant progress on some targets under the Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs), when disaggregated by geography within the developing world, the data shows tremendous inequality in outcomes. In remote, rural, or conflict-affected areas scant progress has been made — an outcome that aligns with the distribution of health professionals and health care coverage. In Pakistan, for example, 84 percent of pediatricians are located in eight urban centres, and some 200 million people have no access to basic health care. The challenge for universities is to help establish systems and build the leadership and practitioner capacities that can reach those underserved areas. Research plays an integral role in that effort.

- Through collaboration with a variety of actors — from governments at the local and national level, the World Health Organization, health professionals, and communities — universities can lead in the translation, monitoring, and evaluation of research into action.

- In order for research to be transformative, it must root itself in interdisciplinary methods (biomedical, health economics, health systems, and social sciences) and cost-effective practice.

It also must represent a full range of stakeholders, from governments to civil society organizations, to academia, and to industry leaders.

- A persistent challenge is that new health knowledge is not applied at the community level. A top-down approach to knowledge translation fails to reach communities and does not reflect the local culture, context, or resources available there. Ultimately, healthcare professionals embedded in these communities are better placed for knowledge translation at that local level, but they need to have resources to help them navigate the larger trends. A microresearch approach repositions that knowledge generation, translation, and application at the local level. Based on the principles of microfinance, with an emphasis on producing quality health research in community-based contexts, multidisciplinary research teams are brought together in two-week trainings and develop a research project while attending workshops and receiving coaching about methodologies, proposal development, and publishing. Working within local contexts creates a new paradigm

for research operations that have positive spillover effects such as promoting leadership and gender equality.

- Partnerships are necessary for this work, particularly for building political will to investigate issues. Working within government systems — for example training community health workers — is critical for sustainability, but it is a slow process and can be challenging gain government support.

- Conflict-affected areas present further challenges for translating research into action. In these instances, it is even more critical to have local people engaged in the decision-making process and in identifying locally relevant solutions.

- The nature of public health training needs to change in order to create "t-shaped individuals" that combine transdisciplinary academic thinking and real world possibilities.

PARALLEL SESSION 1C:
Community Engagement

Emily Antze
Programs Administrator, Borderless Higher Education for Refugees, Centre for Refugee Studies, York University

Enriqueta Reston
Associate Professor, Science and Mathematics Education Department, University of San Carlos, Philippines

Wendy Harris
President and CEO, Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO)

Session Chair: Manon Cornellier
Editorialist, Le Devoir

Description

What are the ways in which universities and their partners can extend development dividends beyond the campus? This session featured three different initiatives through which local higher education insti-

tutions sought to address community-identified needs in partnership with a range of stakeholders. They included a project to improve apiculture in the Philippines; one providing tertiary education opportunities for teachers in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya; and a third focused on strengthening math education at the K-12 level in the Philippines.

> *Conflict-affected areas present further challenges for translating research into action. In these instances, it is even more critical to have local people engaged in the decision-making process and in identifying locally relevant solutions.*

Lessons, Recommendations, and Key Observations

- Generating economic value is key to sustainable development. Essential components for supporting economic development includes inclusive and equitable private sector development, support of local government improvements, and partnerships with universities. The Canadian Executive Service Organization's approach is to provide experts who work in mentorship and advisory capacities with local partners to share experience, unlock intellectual capital, and build local capacity. The apiculture project in the Philippines has led to a revitalization of the honey industry, increased education for farmers, increased food security in the region and increased the profile of agriculture within the country.

- The University of San Carlos project, undertaken in partnership with Academics Without Borders, highlights the critical role that universities can play in strengthening primary and secondary education, as well as the importance of fully engaging the education community in such initiatives. The project engaged in-service teachers throughout the project cycle, from needs assessment to training to post-implementation surveys.

- The Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) program responds to the need for tertiary education for working, but untrained, teachers in the refugee camp. The initiative offers several strategies to meet higher education needs in fragile or conflict-affected areas. Flexibility is critical to overcome the challenges of the local teachers' unstable living situation. BHER learning centres enable students to access courses close to the camp as well as through distance learning — and financial assistance for transportation to the centres addresses safety concerns for female participants. Students can apply course credits to various levels of certification, allowing them to work gradually towards full degrees. Affirmative action in selection and delivery has encouraged female participation.

- A train-the-trainer/ train-the-teacher approach — reflected in all three initiatives — embeds the capacities necessary to sustain outcomes beyond the life of the project within the community and, over time, potentially expand to other areas.

- Short-term funding cycles do not reflect the time required to build local capacities over the long-term, particularly in the context of the BHER project. While the national universities are opening up courses for distance learning by refugees, the reality is that refugees will have a difficult time accessing these on their own without ongoing support.

- Initiatives beyond the campus can provide benefits to students on campus. In the education initiative in the Philippines, graduate students have the opportunity to learn from the K-12 teachers; in the BHER project, through online course participation with the Dadaab teachers, students at the partner universities are changing their attitude towards the refugee camps.

- Community engagement includes involvement in program development, delivery and governance.

University on the Roof of the World

David Agnew
President, Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology

Mahmoud Eboo
Diplomatic Representative of His Highness the Aga Khan to Canada, Aga Khan Development Network

Shamsh Kassim-Lakha
Executive Chairman, Board Executive Committee, University of Central Asia

Description

This session marked the formal launch of a partnership between Seneca College, Toronto, and the University of Central Asia (UCA), a unique higher education initiative in a region of tremendous geo-political significance, but one that remains largely unfamiliar to most Canadians. Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha, Executive Chairman of UCA and President David Agnew of Seneca College shared their perspectives on this innovative collaboration on the roof of the world prior to the official partnership signing ceremony.

The Experience of a Non-profit Teaching Hospital in Northern Uganda

Dominique Corti
Chair, Fondazione Piero e Lucille Corti, Italy; Honorary President, Teasdale-Corti Foundation, Canada

Description

Dr. Dominique Corti presented an overview of the history of the St. Mary's Lacor Hospital, a private, non-profit hospital founded in 1959 and located near Gulu in northern Uganda. She outlined the difficult circumstances in which this hospital has operated, at times as the sole health care provider in a largely rural region decimated by a long civil war, which saw over 95% of the local population displaced. She traced the evolution of Lacor Hospital from a small facility with 30 beds into the second largest hospital in the country, with three peripheral health centres that together treat over 250,000 patients a year. Dr. Corti also described how, at the request of the Government of Uganda, Lacor Hospital has developed to a full teaching hospital site affiliated with the Gulu University Faculty of Medicine.

Smart Global Approaches

Barbara O. Schneeman
Higher Education Coordinator, United States Agency for International Development

Steven Davis
Executive Director, Academics Without Borders

Thierry Zomahoun
President and CEO, African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) Global Secretariat

Moderator: David Agnew
President, Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology

Description

The panel compared strategies and approaches to strengthen higher education in support of development aims, drawing on the perspectives of a range of institutions that seek to strengthen higher education in the Global South: a Canadian volunteer-sending organization, a donor agency, and a multi-faceted initiative to strengthen science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and research in Africa. Do these strategies represent different paths to shared objectives? What are the lessons for policymakers, development practitioners, and academic leaders?

Lessons, Recommendations, and Key Observations

- For sustainability, we must look at approaches that "train the trainer", whether it be faculty development or support to build the administrative capacities of higher education institutions. Small investments in these areas can have

a cascading impact on the quality and capacities of institutions in the Global South.

- STEM education and research will be critical to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals in the Global South. Africa will not transform without STEM education and research, but, at present, less than 25 percent of African students go into STEM fields at the tertiary education level, and no African government spends more than one percent of GDP on research and development. As a result, less than one percent of global research output comes from Africa, even though African research output has more than tripled over the last decade.

- Annually, more than 11 million young people enter the labour market in Sub-Saharan Africa. Something must change urgently within the sphere of higher education to transition these youth into the economy and society.

| *Plenary 2: Smart Global Approaches.*

- Science is global. Major discoveries and technological advances come through collaboration and connection to global knowledge networks. For Africa's young scientists, however, many barriers prevent them from accessing these networks of their peers globally. We must therefore look at how to bring these global fora and networking opportunities to Africa. The "smart global development" conversation must continue in the Global South.

- Donor agencies and host countries do not always identify higher education as a priority. They want the outcome (e.g., increased food security), but they do not always recognize the vehicles needed to get there. Higher education is not the only vehicle, but it is a crucial one. When you argue for the need for greater evidence-based decision-making, you make the case for investment in higher education.

- As identified in USAID's 2009 education strategy, among the foremost challenges hindering progress on higher education in the Global South are: rising costs of higher education; the demographic "youth bulge"; and unequal access on a number of fronts (urban/ rural, income/ socio-economic status, gender, disability, fragile states).

> *… the majority of students will be educated in large, underfunded public institutions. How can private initiatives or other approaches help to strengthen those institutions?*

- When fostering STEM education and research in the Global South, we need to make space for curiosity-driven science, not just need-based science. In sum, we need to support the full spectrum of science.

- We must not assume that actors in diverse contexts understand and approach public-private partnerships (PPPs) in the same way — or possess the necessary capacities for successful PPPs. Some cases require capacity development to create an enabling environment for such cooperation.

- For further reflection;
  - While centres of excellence and quality opportunities are essential in the Global South, the reality is that the majority of students will be educated in large, underfunded public institutions. How can private initiatives or other approaches help to strengthen those institutions? Is it possible to scale up these models?

PARALLEL SESSION 2A:
Demonstrating Impact

Terry Smutylo
Independent Evaluation Specialist; Founder, Evaluation Unit, International Development Research Centre

Tricia Wind
Senior Program Specialist, International Development Research Centre

Session Chair: Pierre Jury
Editorial Page Editor, Le Droit

Description

How can we more effectively gather, evaluate and communicate the development impact or results of investments in higher education? Demonstrating development impact is a challenge for those working to strengthen the capacities of higher education institutions to contribute to development goals for two reasons. First, this work is far from the frontlines of changing peoples' well-being. Second, as development change depends on a confluence of actors and factors, direct attribution is rarely feasible. This workshop-style session led participants through a series of questions and exercises, drawing out examples from their own work to examine how we can more effectively assess and communicate the contributions of higher education to development.

Lessons, Recommendations, and Key Observations

- To measure the development impact of investments in higher education in the Global South, we must change both our terminology and thinking about monitoring and evaluation.

- Developmental change involves a confluence of actors and factors. It is beyond control (but subject to influence) and is valued differently depending on perspective. It can be incremental or cumulative (tipping points), but it can also be non-linear, emergent, or discontinuous.

- "Impact" implies causality or attribution by isolating the effects of an intervention from other influences and factors. It is also defined differently in different contexts for various purposes.

"Development impact" usually implies a large scale, sustainable change in the well-being of a population and its environment. Because developmental change depends on a confluence of actors and factors, the focus should shift to evaluating contribution — rather than attribution.

■ Two frameworks allow us to look at orders of outcome and spheres of influence as methods of determining the contributions of an intervention to developmental change:

  • Stephen Olsen's (2014) domains of developmental change provide a framework that identifies multiple actors within and around an intervention, with orders of outcome and deepening development results. The orders of outcome are: creating enabling conditions (resources contracts, policies and programs, capacities); implementation (actions based on enabling conditions); achievements (desired social and environmental processes established); and dynamic sustainable balance (well-being in human society and its environment).

  • Recognizing the limits of our influence, moving from our sphere of control (project or program), to our sphere of influence (partners), to our sphere of interest (beneficiaries).

■ The emphasis in current approaches on short-term, immediate outcomes obscures the long-term nature of higher education's critical role in advancing and sustaining development. Given the long-term nature of investments in higher education, a shift toward intermediary outcomes — coupled with some short-term metrics — may help better predict success over the long-term.

■ Collaboration with other partners or actors within the sphere of influence of your higher education initiative may provide a means to better connect development gains with the project or program.

Quality Assurance

Greg Moran
Director of Special Projects, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario; Former Provost, Aga Khan University; Provost Emeritus, Western University

Tashmin Khamis
Director, Aga Khan University Network of Quality Assurance and Improvement; President, The East African Higher Education Quality Assurance Network

Session Chair: Céline Cooper
Columnist, Montreal Gazette

Description

How do we define and measure quality in the context of higher education? Are there tensions between international standards and local relevance, and how do we resolve them, particularly for institutions in the Global South with limited resources and capacities in quality assurance (QA)? Drawing on experiences in the East African context, this panel explored connections between innovation, learning outcomes, and local relevance in QA processes.

> *Different types of institutions require different types of quality assurance (graduate, undergraduate, comprehensive research). It is critical for institutions to own QA standards and processes to make the practice sustainable.*

Lessons, Recommendations, and Key Observations

- In the global higher education context, two forces require new approaches and innovation in quality assurance: the massification of higher education and widening participation.

- Quality assurance plays an essential role in strengthening the ability of higher education institutions to advance sustainable development. It requires a deliberate process of capacity building. QA helps to identify where resources are needed most and involves a learning outcome approach, based on the question, "What are the outcomes you want to achieve?"

- At the same time, QA may discourage innovation, imposing standards that can stand in the way of an institution's local relevance. A "one size fits all" model ignores the very different contexts in which universities operate, notably where community engagement functions differently.

- East Africa offers an important example of the how QA processes can ensure high standards and local relevance. Among the key challenges facing higher education in East Africa are rising enrolment without a corresponding rise in the number of educators; a dearth of soft skills in graduates of local institutions; and limited regional and international mobility of students and graduates. The proposed solution is the harmonization of education systems, following a model developed by Aga Khan University that:

  - Provides an enhanced learning environment through the development of distributed networks
  - Integrates networks of quality, teaching, and learning
  - Builds ownership through consultation
  - Creates inclusive, supportive, and safe spaces for the faculty
  - Improves focus and self-assessment

- Different types of institutions require different types of quality assurance (graduate, undergraduate, comprehensive research). It is critical for institutions to own QA standards and processes to make the practice sustainable.

- Accreditation and QA are interconnected and should be aligned.

- QA processes contribute to students and faculty, facilitating exchange, credit transfers, and collaboration with international universities.

Building Strong, Sustainable Universities

Paul Davenport
Chair, Board of Governors, University of Rwanda; President, Western University and University of Alberta

Robin Farquhar
President Emeritus, University of Winnipeg; Former President and Vice-Chancellor, Carleton University

Session Chair: Manon Cornellier
Editorialist, Le Devoir

Description

Investing in administrative capacities, systems, and processes is an essential, but often overlooked component of strengthening the ability of higher education institutions to advance sustainable development goals. Using their experience with institutional capacity building in Rwanda as a case study, the panelists illuminated the integral connections between building administrative and operational capacities and improvements in academic quality and relevance to national development priorities.

Lessons, Recommendations, and Key Observations

- The case study detailed an Academics Without Borders (AWB) initiative that provided Canadian expertise to the Government of Rwanda to help amalgamate previously separate public providers of post-secondary education at the district, state, and national level into a national institution, the University of Rwanda.

- The four broad objectives of the merger as defined by the Government of Rwanda were: improve academic quality; effectively respond to current national and global needs; enhance the international profile of the new institution; and reduce costs.

- A taskforce established through the AWB initiative received a mandate to assist in establishing the governance structures, institutional management, and strategic planning for the university. For this, the taskforce spent five months in

Rwanda, reviewed extensive current documentation, travelled throughout the country to visit all of the existing institutions, and sought the views of numerous stakeholders involved in the amalgamation. Key outcomes of the taskforce's efforts were:

- Revised legislation
- Development and operationalization of a new organizational structure and site management plan
- Creation of a decision matrix, which guided the distribution of responsibility and authority between the University of Rwanda and the Rwandan government
- Definition of the senior management positions and structure
- A capacity-building plan that prioritized the new institution's numerous physical and human resource needs
- A mission statement and strategic planning process
- Analysis and actions plan to address key issues such as gender imbalance
- A charter of academic freedom

■ The University of Rwanda case study demonstrates the connection between higher education and national development priorities in the country's Vision 2020 including: good governance; human resource development in a knowledge-based economy; private sector-led development; infrastructure development; productive, market-oriented agriculture; and cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, natural resources and the environment, science, technologies, and ICT.

■ Investing in administrative capacities, systems and processes is essential for the institution to make a full contribution to students and the country, but it is often difficult to find willing investors.

■ Students have an important role to play in the governance and administrative capacities of universities. In Rwanda, the AWB project promoted a participatory decision-making process, with two students on the university's small board of governors.

■ Understanding the contextual realities of a society — for example a tradition of bureaucracy and hierarchy, fear of violating status and traditions — is essential to overcome general administrative inertia.

PLENARY 3:
Smart Global Investments

Barbara O. Schneeman
Higher Education Coordinator, United States Agency for International Development

Jean Lebel
President, International Development Research Centre

Jeffrey Waite
Advisor, Education Global Practice, The World Bank

Shamsh Kassim-Lakha
Executive Chairman, Board Executive Committee, University of Central Asia

Moderator: Eva Egron-Polak
Secretary General and Executive Director, International Association of Universities

Description

This concluding session sought to pull out the key lessons and insights to emerge from the conference, framed around four questions: Where have we identified smart global investments in higher education? Can we begin to develop a road map for integrating higher education more effectively into development policies, program design, and evaluation? How do we sustain the connections and dialogue initiated over the past two days?

Lessons, Recommendations, and Key Observations

- ■ A set of keywords drawn from the conversations over the past two days might include inclusiveness, innovation, intelligent investment, interconnectedness, integrity, complexity, challenges, cooperation, creativity, and continuity. To that list, three other words were added: local, relevance, and access.

- ■ Evaluation remains a challenge and requires more consideration. Higher education is a long-term development investment, but too often, we must report on outcomes annually, or at best in five-year project cycles. If we become trapped in the metric of short-term, immediate outcomes, we lose sight of the long-term nature of this endeavour.

- ■ The idea of universities as safe spaces for creativity, debate, and intellectual engagement, proposed by Reeta Roy in the keynote conversation, emerged as an important touchstone for rethinking the role of the university in fostering the leadership required to advance development goals.

| *Plenary 3: Smart Global Investments.*

Higher education is a long-term development investment, but too often, we must report on outcomes annually, or at best in five-year project cycles. If we become trapped in the metric of short-term, immediate outcomes, we lose sight of the long-term nature of this endeavour.

- ■ Conversations throughout the conference pushed us to think beyond the "brain drain" to look at the full continuum of brain drain, circulation, and retention.

- ■ To understand the significant role they play in advancing and sustaining development, we must recognize universities and colleges as permanent local institutions, and as permanent local resources. Building strong, sustainable institutions is a generational endeavour and

requires expanded timelines and a shift in expectations around demonstrating short-term results for investments in higher education.

- The fact that development challenges are complex, requiring multidimensional and multidisciplinary solutions, says a lot about how we need to organize academia.

- We need adopt a more holistic approach to education. Throughout the conference, primary and secondary education were frequently presented in opposition to higher education, as though governments and international donors must choose between them. We must resist placing tertiary education in competition with primary and secondary education for resources and support. In reality, higher education institutions have an integral role to play in strengthening education systems across the continuum; development strategies, programming and policies should build upon that integral connection.

- The tension between quality and quantity featured throughout the conference as well, particularly through the lens of public and private institutions.

Conference sponsors with opening keynote speakers. From left: Khalil Z. Shariff (AKFC), Steven Davis (AWB), Eva Egron-Polak, Reeta Roy, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Greg Moran (conference committee chair), Leonard Wantchekon, and Jean Lebel (IDRC).

- Higher education for refugees and communities in conflict-affected areas is of special urgency. This should be a priority issue building on the conference.

- We need to consider regional approaches to strengthening higher education in the Global South to achieve economies of scale.

- When considering how Canada can support higher education in the Global South, we should ensure that provincial governments have a voice in future discussions: in many instances (health, education) the provinces are more connected to the fields that intersect with key development challenges. Their inclusion would provide a means of building capacities and addressing shared challenges in both directions.

■ To harness fully the potential of higher education in support of sustainable global development, we must take a wider view of tertiary education as a system that extends beyond universities. Providers of vocational, technical, and professional education — colleges, polytechnics, and similar institutions — are integral players in that system and in every successful economy and society around the world. Higher education institutions cannot work in isolation: cooperation and coordination across the spectrum is essential to provide countries with the skilled human resources, informed leadership, and expertise to find lasting development solutions.

   • Technical education has very much been a poor cousin to universities, creating a skills drain on top of the brain drain. Universities and colleges are beginning to recognize their responsibility — and the opportunity — to expand beyond degree programs. We need to encourage universities to diversify their offering to be responsive to social and economic contexts and to provide seamless paths between vocational, technical and academic degree programs.

   • Higher education institutions must also look at recognizing and better leveraging prior experience and informal avenues of learning, engaging with the private sector to help define what learning outcomes should be in fields integral to development.

■ For further reflection:

   • Given the current evaluation frameworks, what are some short-term metrics that may help us better predict success over the long-

How do we ensure the continuity of gender mainstreaming inside the ongoing dialogue on higher education and development?

term or let us know whether we are on the right path? For example, in health care, we talk about validated surrogate endpoints. How do we also predict or assess broader impacts of higher education investments?

• A key next step is to tackle the issue of higher education reform in many contexts in the Global South. This topic alone merits a separate conference.

• In the Canadian context, could a Royal Commission on Higher Education move this agenda forward?

• Funding mechanisms for higher education received comparatively little attention during the conference. From block grants to per-student-capita funding to pro-equity top ups: what are the appropriate mechanisms to support the various types of investments required for strong, vibrant and relevant higher education institutions in the Global South? Can more flexible, regionally focused grants help create economies of scale and encourage cross-border cooperation?

• Gender in higher education requires attention on many levels, not the least due to a higher female-to-male ratio of enrollment in higher education institutions in many contexts. How do we ensure the continuity of gender mainstreaming inside the ongoing dialogue on higher education and development?

In Conclusion

Continuing the Smart Global Development Conversation

Throughout the deliberations, participants lauded the conference for providing a space to initiate the exchange of experiences on the role of higher education. They emphasized, however, the need for sustained engagement on this issue with key stakeholders: government, academic, private sector, community, and youth leaders in the Global South, as well as with their counterparts in higher income countries.

The following sets of questions, drawn from the presentations and audience responses, offer a framework for continuing that conversation:

- How can universities and colleges in the Global South engage more directly in the social and economic development of the communities in which they are situated? What additional capacity might be necessary for them to do so? How do we strengthen the social accountability of these institutions to their communities?

- How can we enhance the role of higher education institutions as innovation hubs in the Global South to advance and sustain development goals?

- How can higher education institutions more effectively and deliberately advance women's empowerment and gender equality — and break down the gendered barriers to participation?

What can higher education institutions do to provide refugees and youth in conflict-affected or fragile areas with post-secondary learning and vocational opportunities?

- What can higher education institutions do to provide refugees and youth in conflict-affected or fragile areas with post-secondary learning and vocational opportunities?

- How should higher education institutions define and ensure quality, particularly in view of the tensions between quality and access or scale?

- What methodologies, tools or approaches could strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and learning around the development results of investments in higher education?

- How can institutions in the Global South strengthen access to relevant, high quality vocational, technical and professional education? How might they harness the global experience and expertise of colleges and polytechnic institutes to build capacities and implement programs?

- What is the case for investing in private higher education institutions in the Global South? How can private institutions help strengthen educational quality, relevance, and capacities within public institutions?

- What kinds of support and resources do higher education institutions in the Global South require to contribute more directly to improvements in primary and secondary education systems in their operating contexts? What types of funding mechanisms would help strengthen the education continuum?

- What types of public policies or reforms would create a more enabling environment for innovation, quality, and relevance within higher education institutions in the Global South?

- What are the appropriate funding mechanisms to support the various types of investments required for strong, vibrant and relevant higher education institutions in the Global South? Could more flexible, regionally focused grants help create economies of scale and encourage cross-border cooperation?

Higher education is an investment in the future, in creating the expertise, resources, and leadership all societies require to achieve and sustain the Global Goals.

Such investments in the higher education space require patience: they are generational endeavours. At the same time, the fragilities we encounter across the globe today are so severe that we urgently require vibrant institutions of higher education to anchor progress and serve as bulwarks against instability. While these concluding questions offer a road map for continued engagement, we must continue to make very thoughtful and smart investments in higher education to advance sustainable global development.

Global Youth Voices

Prior to the launch of the conference, the organizers put out a call to young scholars and recent graduates in the Global South and North to contribute their thoughts on three questions that frame the issues of higher education and development from the perspective of emerging leaders.

Their responses were featured throughout the conference — a reminder to delegates of both the significance of the deliberations at hand and the wealth of leadership the next generation already possesses to address today's critical global challenges.

How would you change universities in your country?

University should transition away from its classic theoretical approach where 'diplomas' are more important than training that aims to develop practical skills.

Armanda Kouassi | Ivory Coast
MasterCard Foundation Scholar, University of California at Berkeley

I would adapt the curriculum to include Global South perspectives in the introductory courses to encourage young people to think more critically about their country's relationship with Global South states.

Heather McAlister | Canada
Master's student, University of Toronto

Following the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, I would have an indigenous studies course as a degree requirement and include indigenous scholarship in every course. These are important steps towards decolonizing Canadian post-secondary education.

Katherine MacGregor | Canada
Undergraduate student, University of Toronto

What is needed most is practical training that combines knowledge and skills to better prepare youth for the workplace as well as infrastructure able to accommodate the growing number of students that can take advantage of new communication and information technologies.

Mariama Mary Fall | Canada
PhD student, University of Ottawa
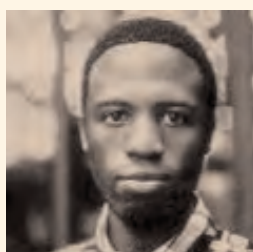
I would give the university, as an institution, back to the students. The students need to be the ones creating these environments, with guidance from the university officials.

Mike Muponda | Zimbabwe
MasterCard Foundation Scholar, University of West Virginia

I would modify most of the programs offered to be more focused on business, technology, creativity, and innovation.

Nonduduzo Ndlovu | Swaziland
MasterCard Foundation Scholar, University of Pretoria

In Afghanistan, all universities should be co-educational. They need more sophisticated facilities. Teacher exchange programs would enhance the quality of instruction, and organized co-curricular programs would be beneficial.

Roya Shams | Afghanistan
Undergraduate student, University of Ottawa

What are the challenges facing youth today?

Qualified human resources and the mentality of my countrymen, especially youth. To be present at the concert of nations, some habits should change. Introspection of the system is needed to define participatory progressive approaches.

Moussa Thiam | Mali
PhD Student, University of Ottawa

When pursuing a life and career it is important to consider the individual optimum vs. the social optimum, balancing the progression of the world with your own individual happiness.

Rehman Shivji | Canada
Undergraduate student, Queen's University

Has your university equipped you for your dream job?

My dream job is to become a professor in a university. My university education is providing me with teaching and research opportunities so I can become better equipped to train and mentor other globally minded social workers.

Brianna Strumm | Canada
PhD student, Carleton University

My dream is to work with passionate Africans who want to make a positive change. I want the organization to have faith in the youth, to challenge and to empower us to tackle problems – consequently, this will create robust future leaders.

Sidee Dlamini | Swaziland
MasterCard Foundation Scholar, University of California at Berkeley

About the Conference Sponsors

AGA KHAN FOUNDATION CANADA
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"Progress in the developing world cannot be sustained without a vibrant constellation of universities, colleges, and research institutes to anchor local knowledge and innovation. Higher education institutions — in Africa, Asia, and Canada — have played a key role in the decades-long collaboration between Canada and the Aga Khan Development Network to improve lives in the developing world. We are coming together for the Smart Global Development conference out of a shared conviction that investments in higher education will underwrite long-term improvements in quality of life."

— **Khalil Z. Shariff,** Chief Executive Officer,
Aga Khan Foundation Canada

Established in 1980, AKFC is a registered Canadian charity and an agency of the worldwide Aga Khan Development Network, a family of development agencies with individual mandates that address social, economic, and cultural dimensions of development. Active in 30 countries, these agencies share a mission to improve living conditions and opportunities for the poor, without regard to their faith, origin or gender. The AKDN includes two universities: Aga Khan University and the University of Central Asia. For more information visit **www.akfc.ca** and **www.akdn.org**.

AWB|USF
Academics Without Borders
Universitaires sans frontières

"Many low- and middle-income developing countries do not have the experts and professionals needed to provide basic services for their citizens, grow their economies, and do the research necessary for sustainable development. To avoid the brain drain, which often happens when students leave their home country to study in the developed world, these countries urgently need to provide high-quality tertiary education within

their own borders. Their universities must be able to create the experts they need by giving their students both knowledge that is relevant to local conditions and the skills necessary to solve problems unique to their socio-economic circumstances. For several years, Academics Without Borders has been working on projects initiated by universities in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia to help them improve their universities' teaching, research, and back-office operations. The Smart Global Development Conference provides an opportunity to demonstrate how good universities can play a vitally important role in improving the lives of developing countries' citizens."

— **Steven Davis**, Executive Director,
Academics Without Borders

Academics Without Borders' mission is to support developing countries in building capacity in higher education so that they can educate their own experts and conduct research to assist in their development. We fulfill our mission by sending professional and academic volunteers on projects that originate from and are owned by our partners in the developing world. Our volunteers work on projects that foster the teaching skills and research expertise needed for health care, education, agriculture, infrastructure, business, and more. We work in all disciplines and areas of instruction as well as helping to upgrade a university's administration and services. We are a bilingual Canadian NGO based in Montreal, with our volunteers working around the world. For more information, visit **www.awb-usf.org**.

IDRC | CRDI

International Development Research Centre
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"The International Development Research Centre has long recognized the immense potential of higher education institutions as drivers of social and economic development, repositories of cultural heritage, research centres for expanding human knowledge and hubs that spark innovation. We are committed to supporting

access to higher education and to finding more effective ways for its integration into development policy, development assistance, program design, and evaluation. This Smart Global Development Conference is a powerful acknowledgement of the promise of higher education in the developing world to forge innovation and resolve challenges."

— **Jean Lebel,** President,
International Development Research Centre

The International Development Research Centre invests in knowledge, innovation, and solutions to improve lives and livelihoods in the developing world. Bringing together the right partners around opportunities for impact, IDRC builds leaders for today and tomorrow and helps drive large-scale positive change. IDRC was established by an act of Canada's parliament in 1970 to help developing countries find solutions to their challenges. The International Development Research Centre Act describes the Centre's mandate: "to initiate, encourage, support, and conduct research into the problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical, and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions." For more information, visit www.idrc.ca.

Acknowledgements

Conference Executive Committee

The Smart Global Development conference executive committee combined expertise from the three institutional organizers and sponsors: Maria Brunelli, Steven Davis, Carrie LaPorte, Shabana Manji, Tavinder Nijhawan, Jennifer Pepall, and Corrie Young. This committee was chaired by Greg Moran, Director of Special Projects, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

Conference Rapporteurs

Eight young scholars responded to a call for rapporteurs to help document the insights and lessons to emerge from the conference sessions, as well as to serve as active participants in the conference. Their work contributed to the development of this report. The conference executive committee acknowledges their contributions: Gissou Ataee; Jean-Marie Cishahayo; Alyshea Cummins; Jennifer Fieldhouse; Jose Miguel Lopez; Stephanie Melliet; Amar Nijhawan; and Mariya Podeyko.