

Devnet Conference, November 2015-Opening Keynote

Dr Gill Greer Volunteer Service Abroad

Cross sectoral Convergence and intersectoral partnerships for the post 2015 Development Agenda

OR

“When the music changes so does the dance” (African proverb)

So is this talk of convergence just “More aid -speak?” What does it mean?

Cross sectoral collaboration is increasingly seen as a "catalyst to address the increasingly complex and interconnected economic, social, and environmental challenges of our times" (Sachs, 2014; Forum p.13)

At its best, convergence is about “The alignment of issues, interests and therefore solutions across sectors.”(Bulloch, 2011)

Today we live in a world that is more interconnected than ever before, not regrettably by peace, prosperity and human rights, but increasingly by conflict, disorder, inequality, the denial of human rights and rule of law, and by climate change, which, in the words of the high level panel on the post 2015 goals, “will determine whether or not we can deliver on our ambitions.” (“A New Global Partnership”).

So in reality it is even more disparate and divided:

As the gap between rich and poor continues to widen within and between countries, it is an increasingly unequal world in which the 85 richest people have the same share of wealth as the poorest 3.5 billion.(HD report)

In the New York Times in August this year, Tom Friedman described a world of disorder:

‘THE United States is swamped by refugee children from collapsing Central American countries; efforts to contain the major Ebola outbreak in West Africa are straining governments there; jihadists have carved out a bloodthirsty caliphate inside Iraq and Syria; after having already eaten Crimea, Russia keeps taking more bites out of Ukraine; and the U.N.’s refugee agency just announced that “the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people worldwide has, for the first time in the post-

World War II era, exceeded 50 million people.” If it feels as though the world of disorder is expanding against the world of order, it’s not your imagination.’

Three big trends are converging....’and the biggest challenge for the world of order today is collaborating. ‘We’ve got to stop messing around ...as if this moment is just the same-old, same-old. Preserving and expanding the world of sustainable order is the leadership challenge of our time ‘(Tom Friedman, New York Times, 23 August 2014)

As we move towards the completion date of the MDGs and beyond, it is important to reflect on what has been achieved in the last 14 years. Although the MDGs were skeletal and simplistic, they provided policy, funding and programme priorities and incentives for governments to address some of the critical issues of our time. But progress in reducing poverty and vulnerability has been uneven. For example, it is expected that only two countries in the Pacific- Niue and the Cook Islands- will achieve the MDGs,

The MDGs with their eight goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators concentrated on the **what** rather than the **how**, so there was no specific mention of human rights. There is a focus on service delivery but not on strengthening the institutions that might deliver or monitor those services and their consequences, or ensuring sustainable progress in the future. There is little on governance, inclusive growth and decent work. The goals on women, partnership, and the environment were weak. There was no mention of those with disabilities, no comprehensive goal for young people, at a time when we have the largest generation of young people the world has ever seen, many of them unable to realize their aspirations; some without aspiration or resilience. Some of the targets were confused at best.

And those of us working in development have learned some lessons. For people like me working internationally in health and human rights in 2000, the missing link in the MDGs was the omission of a goal, or even a target on family planning. This was dropped at the eleventh hour, in spite of evidence which demonstrated that this goal would contribute to the well being and resilience of girls, women, families and communities, improve health, education and contribute to sustainable social, economic and environmental development and the economic empowerment of women. Over 7 years while we advocated for its reinstatement as Target 5B, international funding for family planning

halved and millions of women and children paid the price with their lives and health. And so we learned that what is not included in that global development agenda becomes invisible, overlooked and underfunded. And that is one reason, in my view, for why the new draft Sustainable Development Goal agenda consists of 17 goals and 168 targets, as we all believe that the single critical issue that we consider matters most, and can make the greatest difference, must be included, so that it too does not become invisible, overlooked and underfunded.

As we review the MDGs we must acknowledge that some progress has been made: reductions in malaria and TB, millions more children attend primary school although the momentum is decreasing, millions more families have access to drinkable water. But much still remains to be done-and we have already heard discussion this morning of the numbers still living in extreme poverty. As the gap between rich and poor widens inexorably, the poorest 1.2bn account for 1% of the total consumption of goods and services, while the richest 1bn consume 72%. (A New Global Partnership” executive summary)

And despite those who might argue against a global agenda of this kind, there is some real recognition that such international agreements can “change minds and move the undecided” (UN Contributions to Development Thinking and Practice 2004)

All this debate is taking place in a complex context that has changed since 2004 The transition from the MDGs to the SDGs is one marked by interconnectedness, divergence, disruption, and disorder as Tom Friedman suggests, It is a time of conflict and natural disasters, of financial, and food crises, a time of transition from donorship to ownership, and of climate change when extreme weather events can wipe out hard won development gains in minutes, forcing us to realize the importance of resilience.

In reflecting on the Millenium Declaration and the MDGs, UN Administrator, Helen Clark commented last year, " In 2000 there was nothing like the awareness which exists today of the threat of climate change. Now the predictions pour out...Huge losses have been suffered from extreme weather events...the stress of unsustainable global production and consumption patterns are reflected in high rates of deforestation, water scarcity,

food waste and greenhouse gas emissions. Current development models have brought us to the brink of planetary boundaries" (Helen Clark, Robert Chapman Lecture, 2013)

The UN SIDS conference held recently in Samoa was unequivocal in its declaration that 'climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, adaptation is an immediate and urgent priority. In the words of one PM 'it is the greatest weapon of mass destruction.'

At last there seems to be growing understanding of this truth, and of the need for resilience. A few weeks ago the private sector joined government representatives in New York at the Climate Summit at the invitation of the Secretary General, and committed to a number of changes. The US and China reached a level of agreement last week, and even Tony Abbott appears to have had a brief epiphany and change of mind in Brisbane last week with the G20.

No longer is climate change something that happens to someone else, somewhere else. Instead one country's emissions and pollution become another's major concern.

A few years ago, I listened to Gordon Brown as he put aside his speech on financial reforms to speak somberly and passionately about climate change. In his view, with climate change the world would never be the same, we would never be the same, development would never be the same, and so we must learn to 'do development differently.'

What is clear is that governments can no longer 'do development' on their own, partly because of the expected cost to implement the SDGs, but also because if development gains are to be sustainable, and we are to achieve resilience, then civil society, and the private sector must be included in the planning, implementation, accountability and measurement of policies and strategies.

And other boundaries, which were once so clear, are becoming increasingly blurred as we seek for the way to sustainable social, economic and environmental development, The binary divides of the past cannot continue as boundaries blur and issues merge: The difference between humanitarian aid and development aid, has been replaced by recognition of the need for readiness and resilience, and we know that a dollar spent in preparedness saves seven needed for recovery.

Poverty elimination, inclusive economic growth, and environmental sustainability must be considered and addressed together, not in policy silos.

The distinction between low and middle income countries has become less clear and less easily defined by measures such as GDP. As the CID 'Report to the incoming Government' reminds us, a 'new' bottom billion now live in middle income countries, making up 72% of the world's poor.

In 1970 Milton Friedman stated that the "social responsibility of business is to increase its profits" This now has to be replaced by trust, by "mixing commercial and non profit objectives" (Forum p 10) in hybrid models. In this world of convergence, can shareholders become stakeholders, and genuine investors in the wider social good -so that no-one is left behind?

Differences between 'developing' and 'developed' countries change as we see emerging but different donors like the BRICS and MINT countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China South Africa; Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey (Riddell p 38)

And ultimately we come to the dichotomy that has been paramount for many who see the road from Rio, and the road from the Millenium Declaration and the international conferences of the 1990's as two parallel lines: -- the dichotomy of people and planet.

But increasingly we know that it makes little sense to talk about poverty eradication and environmental sustainability as separate issues, when the world's poorest people are bearing the brunt of climate change. This is the world of convergence and it requires intersectoral thinking and joined up action.

So - If the unfinished business of the MDGs is to be linked with the calls from Rio plus 20, how can this be achieved? How can the demands and needs of people and planet be reconciled? Should there be a global development agenda? Can more be achieved through a global agenda than by individual countries acting alone?

Not surprisingly the journey to determining the SDGs has been a long and winding road, or more accurately 2 long and winding roads. The process has involved open working groups, engagement of civil society, major groups, regional meetings, country consultations, surveys, the establishment of the High Level Political Forum, the Report from the High level panel of Eminent Persons, a proliferation of agendas, activities,

consultations. And now we await the map for the next stage of the journey: the release of the SGs synthesis report which is due any day. And as I describe this, you may be thinking of some of those UN oddities such as ‘zero zero drafts’, and some of you are probably asking yourselves ‘what does it matter, the UN is just a talkfest, we are development practitioners, we are doers not talkers’. Some of the Wellingtonians among you may be thinking of the Dom Post headline last week ‘Dictators continue to flourish as weak United Nations flounders’ (Roger Boyes, Dominion Post 21 November 2014.) But we also know the importance of that new list of priorities, that it matters to millions if they are the ‘wrong’ priorities, that critical issues of equity, social justice and sustainability could once again become invisible, as they have so often before.

The UN Charter speaks for ‘We the peoples’ And so what is it that the people want? For themselves, their grandchildren, for present and future generations? How can their participation in decision making be ensured?

The Secretary General’s panel of Eminent Persons that was responsible for the report ‘A New Global Partnership’ consulted widely with governments, the private sector, and civil society. There were unprecedented opportunities for governments to consult with their people, though some did not, and for all of us to contribute on line. In ‘The world we want’ survey, people called for health, education, job opportunities and good governance as the top priorities. Protection from violence, water, protection of rivers and oceans were in the top 8 for respondents across all income levels, while gender equality was lower, as was climate change.. How can these priorities be met? This is a huge question - but failing to answer it will be fatal. Each of us must ask ourselves- ‘are we and our organisations still able to be relevant, resilient and responsive to such challenges, or as one of my colleagues often reminds us,” Are we Kodak?” Have we too failed to keep up, to see the changes around us, and read the warning signs?

We already know that the SDGs –whatever the final list-will cost trillions- another reason why governments cannot meet these challenges on their own, nor should they: people must be involved as active participants in shaping and implementing decisions. We also know that the SDGs are intended to be a universal agenda. How else can global challenges like climate change and poverty, growth and sustainable development be tackled?

As interests converge there are new and greater opportunities for intersectoral convergence and partnerships, for conversations for collaborative change not just between the like-minded but the unlike. These can, in fact be more productive. Opportunities, challenges, change: risks and threats- What are the rules? As with the blurring of other binary divides and the merging of issues we must ask ourselves about the demarcation between the silos of government, business and civil society? What are the new hybrids? As NGOs establish social enterprises and charitable companies to support their charitable purpose, and become more "business-like so businesses form trusts and philanthropic foundations like the Gates and Buffett Foundations. These can have massive impacts on development- far beyond the influence and aid budget of many governments,

As Bill Gates said to the G 20 three years ago, speaking of a new era in development "Aid is a small investment that generates a huge return ... the market often fails to address the needs of the poorest but the private sector **can** be more involved in development." "Ultimately the goal is to combine the world's total resources-public, private, rich and poor and in between in ways that drive development forward...".

So what are the roles of government, of business, of civil society in donor countries and emerging economies? Can they be complementary, can they achieve more together than apart? Can they find common ground while agreeing to disagree at the far ends of the continuum?

In Helen Clark's view they can: " a new global agenda needs to take into account the partnership possibilities emerging from today's shifting geopolitics and geo- economics, and from the widening range of development actors- across emerging economies, the private sector, foundations and NGOs, and a vibrant civil society in developing countries."(Robert Chapman lecture 2013.)

Indeed as you all know, in 2005,the Paris Declaration stated that aid receiving countries should "take the lead in co-ordinating aid at all levels" while the promises of Busan in 2011 called for governments to support the engagement of civil society, and for increased accountability from NGOs. Similarly NGOs, of course, must continue to call on governments to be accountable, despite the risk of doing so.

Convergence-in the sense that I am using it today, is about the " the alignment of issues, interests, and therefore solutions across sectors" (Bulloch 2011 cited in Forum p 6), Generally it involves at least 3 of 4 key groups, all of whom are under heightening pressure, and motivated by drivers that are both similar and dissimilar:-

For **Governments**, already under fiscal pressure, there are now greater expectations, increasing social demands, and not surprisingly they look to the private sector and civil society to share this responsibility and cost eg Cameron's big society, This expectation to deliver development is often enforced by their peers.

The Private sector, now experiences greater expectations from governments and citizens to act responsibly: to seek the big ideal rather than the big idea, to value degrees for good, rather than for wealth, to increase philanthropy and ally with NGOs to improve relationships and reputation. Businesses have developed CSR, Sustainability and the triple bottom line of financial, social and environmental performance (forum p 13).The private sector has often responded with alacrity and insight to humanitarian emergencies-now we need to persuade them to help to prevent such disasters, and to increase resilience, recognizing that \$1 spent in building readiness will save \$7 in a crisis response.

Similarly **civil society** experiences greater and varying expectations from all their stakeholders: expectations of greater value for money, to do "more with less", demonstrable results, greater efficiency, outputs and outcomes. in 2003 we knew that the "Strategic Policy framework for relations between NZAID and New Zealand NGOs" not only recognised NGOs' role as " distinct from both the state and the private sector", but also "that the government and NGOs share several common goals and interests including the reduction of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development...the harnessing of different approaches to development and co-operation in pursuit of common goals are key ingredients of a productive and mutually beneficial relationship." We valued that partnership as we continue to do, together with the recognition of NGOs' wider mission, and the acceptance of evidence based advocacy related to that mission, the view "that the role of NGOs in society is broader than those aspects that are funded by the New Zealand Government". ("Strategic Policy Framework for relations between NZAID and New Zealand NGOs")

Today, although the difference between evidence- based advocacy or policy advice, and

lobbying no longer seems so clear, New Zealand's MFAT continues to fund NGOs to make a difference internationally, with a particular focus on the Pacific, but the PFID is a different funding model, a single partnership fund for all sectors, and intended to encourage collaboration between NGOs, the private sector and the public service, although cross sectoral partnerships are fewer than expected.

We recognise now, as we did then, that in many countries it is a huge risk for NGOs even to begin to exercise their legitimate role of advocacy. In the past a many as 100 laws have been passed within a single year to limit the advocacy of civil society organisations.

And what of **Donors** –governments, multilaterals, foundations: they expect more results, not just value for money but a better world. They see potential in creating cross sectoral partnerships, harnessing diverse skills and expertise, creating synergy, and improving effectiveness.(Forum p 7) But as I remarked frequently in my previous role-too often they talk collaboration- and fund competition, and they can fail to recognise that collaboration requires resources of time, people and money-and all three are often beyond community organisations and NGOs.

Other aspects of the environment also contribute to this convergence between these players. There are also shared drivers, costs, shared knowledge, In some cases we have already learned from each other. Most NGOs have become more business like. As a FC said to me years ago looking over my shoulder at the balance sheet- "Not for profit doesn't have to mean for loss!" NGOs have developed businesses, and successful social enterprises to fund their charitable purposes, meet funding gaps and provide services formerly provided by the state or more affordably than the private sector. Some governments, including ours, have encouraged them to do so.

So there have been changes and coalitions within and between sectors but where do the interests of these 4 groups converge? What are the rules by which all must play? Of course this is not a new game in town. There have always been such relationships particularly within sectors, Some of the world's most successful NGOS have complemented governments' role by providing health services funded by governments: reaching out to those whose needs governments cannot or will not meet.

Leaders from the private sector have provided strong leadership on NGO boards, some have Board members from government departments. NGOs have come together to advocate to form alliances –how else would New Zealand have been so successful in managing the HIV epidemic? Some of these alliances have brought together different sectors and different countries in global multi stakeholder platforms, the potential of which is still relatively unknown. These include the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and the Global Compact; the Connect 4 Climate network supported by the WB; International Model Forest Network; the Round Table for sustainable Palm Oil; FP2020. I sit for example on the board of a global initiative for private sector volunteers to work to support the delivery of the SDGs across the globe, sharing expertise and knowledge and building reciprocity and understanding.

This time a year ago civil society representatives from our region speaking at the UN described behaviour by the private sector as “rapacious exploitation”, while others noted that transnationals are wealthier than some countries and that governments’ ability and space to regulate corporate activities in the public interest is limited.” (UNGLS regional report)

Last year too, the EU Development Commissioner warned that the private sector must understand that involvement in development activities should be aimed at long term change not short term gain.

And so NGOs must continue to "advocate for civil society, and to counterweight the influence and potential abuses of companies and governments" (Forum p 11) and hold governments accountable. They in turn must hold civil society and businesses accountable.

At the same time businesses need to create jobs while reducing their impact on the environment, while governments still must promote the common good, and design and " enforce sound regulatory environments" (Forum p 11)

So where and how do the interests converge? What are the rules? Some would argue that civil society working with businesses can often achieve more than by attacking on the outside.

Last year the Secretary General declared that civil society had never been so important to the UN Agenda. This rhetoric needs to be acted on: 25 NGOs admitted to the GA, does not indicate that their involvement is a priority; a maximum of 24 members of civil

society granted 3 minutes of precious speaking time over three days at a meeting of Heads of State reviewing the MDGs is simply not a meaningful opportunity for their voice to be heard.

However, the UN does increasingly see cross sector collaboration as a key determinant for achieving ambitious goals such as eradicating extreme poverty, reducing inequalities across and within countries, and preserving the environment" (Forum p 13). In GA Resolution 67/138 it "encourages member states to promote where appropriate, further engagement of the private sector, through the expansion of corporate volunteering, ...as well as increased coordination between the private and public sectors."

And so we have seen collaboration at the local community level, and at the global and regional levels, and corporates engaged in volunteering internationally. And we have also seen the rhetoric of convergence turned into reality here in the Pacific.

In VSA's case, our Council decided three years ago to develop partnerships with the private sector in order to diversify the range of volunteers who could build capacity of in-country partners to meet their evolving needs as their countries' economies began to grow. By doing this we could also increase the understanding of development among a wider group of New Zealanders, and their skills and understanding.

One of the partnerships between VSA and the private sector has resulted in young Downer leadership cadets being selected and supported to contribute their time, skills and knowledge in building the capacity of the Ministry of Education in the Solomons. Not only has this contributed to a major schools renewal project but for them, in their words, it was life changing.

Similarly volunteers from GHD have supported the town council of Luganville in Vanuatu to implement a major waste management project which has not only improved public health and environmental sustainability but built local capacity, knowledge and understanding.

And indeed if such multi sectoral, multi stakeholder partnerships are to be brokered and if unlike partners are to succeed together, there needs to be due diligence, a certainty of fit, clear communication and expectations, sound relationships resulting in mutual trust, and reciprocal respect for each others' competencies and role, shared goals Visionary

leadership, shared governance and funding-including enough to provide the “glue to help to hold the relationships together in practical ways, shared commitment to m and e, integrity, transparency, and accountability-all these are critical. All must recognise that governments must have responsibility for regulation and supervision (DIFID) and all parties need to act in ways that are socially responsible, environmentally sound, and legally compliant.

But too often the a key message about the benefits of a focus on economic growth has been primarily to emphasise the benefits to companies in the private sector in the **donor** country in a spirit of enlightened self interest : " smart aid isn't just good for the countries we're helping , it's good for Britain too...how much better to start our relationships with these countries sooner rather than later? " (Greening, 2014)

We must ask ourselves, will increased involvement of the private sector in the development agenda simply encourage a mode of development that continues to prioritise growth rather than sustainability, inclusiveness and redistribution? How do we ensure honest responsive governance?

Of course it would be foolish not to acknowledge the risks. These include the possibility of failure, as with any innovation, of poor solutions, NGOs could find themselves used to legitimise dubious corporate business interests. Business can see government as progress as glacially slow and bureaucratic, and NGOs as tree hugging lefties.

Partnerships are inherently unequal, Varying ownership can contribute to issues related to attribution-not to mention who gets to report, meet the media, meet the minister?

Reputational risk can impact in any direction

There can be insufficient return, and, as with any marriage, small issues can inflate into major disruption and irretrievable breakdown. The added value can be difficult to define, the potential of real gains can be sacrificed for short termism and quick wins to satisfy competing demands or reach completion within a government’s political term. In fact that is one of the headlines that we must recognise is that successful partnership will take time as well as trust.

But surely the risk of doing nothing, of Business As Usual, of not doing development differently, of not joining the dots, and connecting diverse experiences, skills, knowledge, shared purpose, collective solidarity and a belief in a better world, is too great. We must harness the best knowledge, talents, skills and wisdom that we have, across sectors and

countries. Surely now is the time to see this as an opportunity for new partnerships and new approaches, rather than as a threat? And it is time, as Linda Cruse has said, for NGOs and governments to value the private sector not for its money but for its problem solving and expertise.

And it is right that while a degree of compromise and pragmatism will be required, so will a willingness to understand difference, in order to achieve coherence, and a recognition of each other's bottom line.

The report from the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the 2015 Agenda calls for a new Global Partnership to eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development, It is time for “a new spirit of solidarity” : ” to put sustainable development at the core; to transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth; to build peace and open accountable institutions; to reduce corruption, illicit finance flows and tax evasion and build financial stability and for everyone involved to be fully accountable.” Within this new global partnership, “each priority area should be supported by dynamic partnerships... new ways of working.”

Surely then the music **has** changed-and so must the dance.

References:

Sachs, J (2014) The Path to Sustainable Development, university lecture. 25 February 2014, Columbia University

Forum. Convergence and International Volunteer Cooperation. Forum Discussion paper 2014; Mathieu Bouchard & Emmanuel Raufflet

Bulloch, G (2011) Where Do Nonprofits Fit in a Convergence Economy. Accenture D.P. A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development :The report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. UN 2013

HD Report. Human Development Report 2014. Sustaining Human progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience. UNDP

Riddell, Roger (2014) Does foreign aid really work? An updated assessment.

Discussion Paper 33, Development Policy Centre, ANU

Strategic Policy Framework for relations between NZAID and New Zealand NGOs 2004

UN-NGLS. Advancing Regional Recommendations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda: A Consultation with Civil Society. 2013