

Knowledge for Development
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As the 1995 financial crisis hit Mexico, this newspaper started a small revolution that would help turn Korea into a knowledge-based economy and would bear on how the World Bank thinks about knowledge for development. The *Maeil* was looking for an answer to the very prescient question of the day, “Could this happen in Korea?” This initiative resulted in the *Vision Korea Report, Revitalizing the Korean Economy towards the 21st Century*, published in October 1997, just as financial crisis reached these shores.

The report called for Korea to make a strategic shift—to become a knowledge-based and globally connected economy. Other sectors of civil society joined the media in building a consensus for changing Korea’s development model. The government came on board; commitment to the effort was made in January 2000 by President Kim Dae-jung. Korea then sought the help of the World Bank in the development of its new strategy, and this was the beginning of a long and enduring partnership.

The World Bank itself at the time had begun to examine how to capture the knowledge that it was amassing as the largest development institution and leverage it for development. Former World Bank President Jim Wolfensohn first introduced the term “The Knowledge Bank” in the late 1990s to describe a critical strategic redirection.

Today we stand at a crossroads having learned a few important lessons in more than 60 years of development work. Money alone cannot solve the world’s problems. We have learned that whether or not a child dies from a preventable disease may have something to do with money but not money alone. It also has something to do with the parents and whether they know how to keep their baby healthy or where to get help.

Similarly, on a macro level we have learned that knowledge, not capital alone, makes the most difference in whether a country is able to make progress addressing the challenges of economic growth, poverty reduction, and improved livelihoods for its people.

And, we have learned that we, at the World Bank and other aid organizations, do not have all the answers to solving the world's problems. We believe that today it is this humility coupled with amazing technological advancement that will help us go much farther than we have thus far in exploiting knowledge for development.

In a recent speech at George Washington University in Washington DC, World Bank President Robert Zoellick called for a new way to think about aid in a world that has changed so dramatically since the Bretton Woods Institutions were founded in 1944. In practical terms moving beyond aid, he said, means investing in connectivity while gathering data and sharing information. In this new world economy, data and knowledge are as important as money, if not more so, and the World Bank can offer a public good by generating data, sharing it, and sponsoring others who will help us democratize development.

Democratizing development means, among other things, opening the doors to knowledge so that others can help us address the problems we grapple with. It means everyone can play a part in finding open development solutions.

Crowd sourcing is one of the emerging mechanisms for both solving problems and sharing solutions and it is a community of software designers that is among those changing how we do aid today. Random Hacks of Kindness is known for introducing an SMS service following the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile to let people inform their families of their status. These engineers located all over the globe are generating dozens of solutions and sharing them where needed: mapping disaster areas or navigation for emergency vehicles; tracking displaced persons, humanitarian food distribution, spread of disease.

In Dar es Salaam a group of students took it upon themselves to map their communities in order to improve access to water and other services for their neighbors. All of these are transformational solutions, and they can be global or local. They are solutions that lead to other solutions. And the knowledge generated can be shared across the globe in seconds as long as there are networks and connections.

For our part, at the World Bank, we are looking at ways to strengthen those networks and connections. There is a multiplier effect that can have a profound impact on development as long as knowledge continues to be captured, customized and shared. For us, moving beyond Aid means transforming ourselves from a producer of knowledge to an open knowledge partner.

For example, we can leverage our vast network for the benefit of small farmers in Africa who have doubled their growing season thanks to some vital connections with people in China who had reclaimed similarly eroded land and were willing to share what they learned. The World Bank identified ten ideal recipients to benefit from China's experience. Subsequently, Tanzanian officials have worked with rural communities to double their growing seasons using new irrigation techniques. In Malawi, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security improved irrigated farming and incorporated local knowledge into a broader water management project in the poverty-stricken South. And Ghana's Sustainable Land Management Committee is using the experience to develop and implement economic, social, and environmental programs in watersheds throughout the country.

In today's world it is no longer just the advanced industrialized countries providing assistance. Countries from Colombia to Vietnam are interested in learning best urban practices from Korea—a world leader in successful urbanization and urban management. The Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements partners with the Bank in providing technical assistance. Under WeGo—the World E-Governments Organization of Cities and Local Governments—Korea is helping developing countries access global expertise through networks of city and local government leaders. East African cities will soon be able to use the program to develop best practice e-Government programs.

Knowledge is being shared all across the developing world. Successful Mexican and Brazilian social protection systems are being looked to for their innovation in keeping children in school, improving infant and maternal mortality, and overcoming poverty without breaking budgets. Korea continues to drive this important effort, for example by making sure during its presidency of the G20 last year, that knowledge for development was a core component of the development agenda.

The World Bank and Korea's Ministry of Strategy and Finance recently signed a new Memorandum of Understanding committing them to collaboration on the Korean Knowledge Sharing Program—a demand-driven and performance-oriented comprehensive consultation program designed to assist the development of partnerships in key policy areas by sharing Korea's specific development knowledge and experience.

The work of the Korean Development Institute is also critical to this agenda. The Institute is a valuable source of research and analysis and the two organizations work together on multiple initiatives designed to share Korea's development successes with others.

We believe that when we partner with others and when we move from centralized, expert-led, linear models to collaborative, open, and networked approaches that connect expertise we can be powerful enablers.