

**FROM AID TO GLOBAL SHARING
OF KNOWLEDGE:
Research Excellent and Commitment
to Development ¹⁾**

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It is an honor for me to participate in this philanthropically objective driven international conference. I really appreciate the wisdom of the organizer in formulating the corner stone of our working hypothesis that is ***“pursuing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is not merely a moral obligation, but a task, which serves universities own interest”***. I consider this conference as an important step toward proving the hypothesis by empirical evidence.

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The prime target : eliminating poverty and extreme hunger

Although the MDG is a set of eight goals, I tend to view eradication of poverty and hunger as the foremost goal. Following Noble laureate Amartya Sen, eradication of poverty and hunger has both intrinsic and instrumental value. *First*, eradication of poverty and hunger is itself an invaluable objective of development. Freedom from destitution and hunger are basic human rights, needed to assure a healthy, productive, respectful and dignified life. Not only legally, but politically for all governments, fulfillment of these two basic human rights is an ethical or moral obligation for all individuals and institutions, public or private, in the world.

Second, if we are successful in eradicating poverty and hunger, then other goals will follow suit. Poverty alleviation and food security are instrumental in achieving the other MDGs. I can not imagine how we can achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis if a large number of households are still suffering from poverty and

food insecurity. I do not believe we can ensure environmental sustainability if poverty and food insecurity are still prevalent.

Third, eradicating hunger and poverty promotes growth. Increasing income and fulfilling food needs in developing countries creates large additional demand globally, which is growth promoting not only for developing economies but also for developed economies. Eradicating hunger and poverty is beneficial for all countries.

Clearly, poverty alleviation and food security should be the main focus of our campaign to achieve the MDG. The best way to achieve this is through fostering agricultural development in developing countries.

Although, it is not explicitly stated, we all certainly agree that global higher education institutions could play instrumental roles in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) through firstly, general teaching for improving human resource quality of young generations as the development agents; secondly, research for generating innovative science and technology as the prime driving force of modern developments; and thirdly, public service for facilitating direct participation in

outreach development programs in developing countries, agricultural development in particular.

As requested by the organizer, my short notes will be focused on the second aspect, research cooperation for promoting global development to pursue the achievement of the MDG through fostering agricultural development in developing countries. But, before we discuss this issue, it is imperative to know the prevailing state of developed countries' development assistance for developing countries.

The challenge : privatization and commercialization of scientific research

It is ironical, since the declaration of the MDG by the United Nation, developed countries' external assistance for developing countries has been continued to decline. Not only declining in total value, composition of the external assistance has also been changing away from agricultural and rural development which should have been in reverse direction if we are indeed pursuing the achievement of the MDG. Industrial countries external assistance for agriculture and rural development declined

steadily from \$ 103 billion or 12,6 percent of total external assistance in 1990 to \$ 84 billions or 10,7 percent of total external assistance in 1999.

The same is true for assistance on research and development. The direction of global agricultural research and development has changed toward private technology. Developed countries assistance for non-profit international agricultural research institutes declined. Advancement in knowledge-based innovations will be fully controlled by a limited number of multinational corporations of the developed countries are not readily accessible by the poor in developing countries.

The problem is aggravated by the WTO agreements on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) that governs global knowledge and technology transfers. The WTO agreements on TRIPS legitimate exclusive private property right on knowledge and technology.

The WTO agreement on TRIPS is certainly necessary to promote private sector investment in research and development and hence helps boost advancement of science and technology. While beneficial, it also has some far-reaching negative effects.

First, rapid expansion of private investment could crowd-out public investment in research and development. This may be the reason why external assistance for public research and development institutes has been declining in recent years. Without exception, this could also happen to assistance for international cooperation programs of higher education institutions provided by developed countries, such as what we are now discussing about.

Second, it facilitates and promotes privatization and commercialization of science and technology. Knowledge and technology will be increasingly impossible to share. The idea of global sharing of knowledge, as what we are discussing now, could become an impossible proposition.

Third, as the final consequence, knowledge based innovations will not be readily accessible by the poor in developing countries. The science and technological gap between the developed and developing countries will therefore continue to widen.

The three consequences could hamper the noble efforts of the global higher education institutions to pursue the achievement of the MDG. Global higher education institutions should be focused on research to produce

innovative knowledge and technology which are readily accessible by the poor in developing countries. This may be the proper interpretation of the so-called research excellent committed to global development.

Opportunity: public–private research complementarities

Privatization and commercialization of scientific research will continue to be a rule in the globalization era. We should not and cannot stop it. It certainly has some beneficial roles in global development, including in achieving the MDG. The private research should be considered as complementary to public research. There should be division of research area positioning: private research institutes would concentrate in private knowledge and technology, whereas public research institutes, including universities, would concentrate in public knowledge and technology.

By its very nature, profit oriented private research institutes will certainly concentrate in private knowledge and technology research. They do not have incentive to get involve in research for public knowledge and technology innovation. The reason is that public

knowledge and technology is impossible to be commercialized. Accordingly, it is the task of the public and non-profit research institutes, such as universities to get involve in research for public knowledge and technology innovations.

It should be noted that public and private knowledge and technology could be synergic. Each could have positive spill over effects one for another. The complementary positioning is not only necessary for research coverage gap filling or correcting the private market failure, but it is also good for taking the advantage of synergy between the two types of research.

In line with the corner stone of our working hypothesis, stated in the beginning of this short notes, I therefore recommend that global higher education institutions should concentrate themselves in research for public knowledge and technology innovations. Public innovation is generally more readily accessible by the poor in developing countries. Public innovation is not for exclusive or commercial distribution. It is therefore the most appropriate area of research for achieving the MDG.

Necessary condition : a common platform

Universities are generally not profit-oriented institutions. They do not have their own resources to finance research for public innovation. Research for global public innovation must be financed by public fund, primarily through government budget. Frankly speaking, the most capable ones for supporting this kind of research are the governments of the developed countries. Strong commitment of the governments of the developed countries to provide sufficient financial supports for universities in their efforts to conduct research for global public innovation is the critical condition in realizing the corner stone of our working hypothesis in pursuing the MDG. This would require that the universities and the governments of the developed countries have common platform: strong commitment to assist developing countries through innovative public knowledge and technology. This is a political decision that requires political advocacy.

It is therefore important to convince the governments and the people of the developed countries

that helping the developing countries to escape from poverty trap or to achieve the MDG is not merely a moral obligation but a task, which serves the developed countries own interests as well. Rapidly expanding developing countries economies creates huge market and business opportunities for the developed countries' economies and corporations. The final goal of the public campaign is to have a common working hypothesis between universities and the government of the developed countries.

Only if they have a common working hypothesis, can universities get sufficient supports from the governments of the developed countries. With the some working hypothesis, perhaps, the government of the developed countries would be willing to review their development cooperation assistance to the developing countries. In particular, is the important of increasing the value of the external assistant and the need to re-arrange the components as well as composition of the external assistance. This is the right time to sell the idea of external aid reorientation from aid to global sharing of knowledge.

I personally think that both direct development aid and global sharing of knowledge have their own merits. Global sharing of knowledge cannot replace all the traditional direct development components. Food aid, for example, cannot be fully substituted by sharing of knowledge. I tend to argue that global sharing of knowledge is most appropriate for long-term economic development. Perhaps, what we need is to get sufficient resources to support universities research in public knowledge and technology innovation as the prime mover of the developing countries' economic development.

This is indeed not an easy task to do. But at the least, I think, we now have a common working hypothesis: pursuing the achievement of the MDG as both our moral obligation and task that serves our respective own interests.

Thank you very much.