

24th session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Written input by the Institute for Conscious Global Change

Item 5: Principles of effective governance for delivery of equitable and sustainable development for all.

The UN Principles of effective governance for delivery of equitable and sustainable development for all are an important step in the Agenda 2030 process. But attention needs to be paid to operationalizing these principles in communities. The Institute for Conscious Global Change has developed a framework for helping governments and societies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in their communities. This framework—the Millennium Earth Project—uses Geographic Information Systems (GIS), GeoDesign, Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS), and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) in a cloud-based database to provide up-to-date data for decision-making and monitoring implementation. This framework includes a “Citizen App” for citizen participation in real time. Although the data can be aggregated to higher levels, the framework is designed for local communities that organize multi-stakeholder sessions for setting development priorities, embedding the priorities in local development plans, and monitoring cross-sectoral development changes to achieve the SDGs. This framework promotes transparency, accountability and participation. Citizens can access the database anytime, during their multi-stakeholder meetings and any time before or after the iterative sessions. Millennium Earth Project contributes to SDG 11 on communities, SDG 16 on strong institutions and SDG 17 on partnerships.

***What are the current problems with implementing the SDGs?**

Implementing the SDGs has been stalled and, in 2025, needs an impetus to accelerate the journey to the SDGs. Despite the rhetoric of the establishment of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, many governments and societies have met substantial resistance to changes related to the SDGs. There are, *inter alia*, several reasons for the difficulty of SDG implementation.

- Lack of real and up-to-date data frustrates much local level development. Some national governments do not share real data with officials and citizens in communities. When they do share data, the data is often out-of-date and not in a version that can be interpreted by the citizen public.
- Focus on projects, rather than multi-sectoral programmes, crowds out more holistic strategies. Both governments and citizens are used to focusing planning and implementation on specific, usually sectoral, projects. The projects seem to be more concrete and actionable than broader holistic strategies. Although the SDG framework speaks of integrated, comprehensive development, in practice, most efforts to achieve that SDGs are project-focused.

- Agencies and organizations still work in silos and seldom share data. This lack of inter-organizational focus frustrates integrated goals. Reaching out to other agencies and organizations needs to be facilitated and rewarded. Achievement of the SDGs requires a framework for sharing data.
- Much development work is conceptualized and managed at the national level, despite the fact that citizens feel most development in their local communities. Although the Millennium Earth Project can be implemented best in a thoroughly devolved environment—with local government having decision-making and self-organization and self-finance—the Millennium Earth Project can be deployed in less devolved environments.
- Citizen participation is promoted but not integrated into long-term development planning and implementation. Often, there is a one-off activity to develop local goals, after which the citizens are largely ignored until the next election or change in officers. The Millennium Earth Project framework provides a basis for evidence-based decision-making and an iterative process of continuous monitoring and evaluation of development activities. given lip-service, but citizens seldom set priorities, monitor implementation and evaluate results. The Millennium Earth Project framework is not a specific training course, but rather development of the community’s capacity to plan, implement and develop. The Millennium Earth Project process provides continuity through “organization development”.

***The Millennium Earth Project can help to overcome resistance to change and lack of awareness of development processes.**

Local level. Despite much talk at national levels about achieving the SDGs, the real work is at the local level. This local work can best be accomplished when the local government has the authority and capacity to lead development activities. Genuine devolution that involves finance and personnel creates a useful environment for local government development work. One of the advantages of local level development work is that the citizens want to see results and do not care which department is in charge of the activity. This is useful for the SDGs because they need multi-sectoral foci. Coordination between agencies and organizations is more likely to be effective at the local level. Another advantage is that citizens are ever present and cannot be ignored or put off. The Millennium Earth Project focuses on the local level, whether called counties or municipalities or whatever. The Millennium Earth Project’s multi-stakeholder meetings involve citizens, officials and representatives of key groups, such as students, elderly, women, business and unemployed. These meetings bring relevance and importance to the deliberations.

Database framework. The Millennium Earth Project builds a geospatial database (each data point is geo-tagged and time-stamped). The data can be aggregated and disaggregated for presentation and analysis. The database incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data, including informal data observed or reported by citizens. The Millennium Earth Project database uses official data from all agencies as well as citizen-generated data. The framework provides for continuous updating and expansion of the database. Furthermore, the data framework includes

earth observation data about natural resources. Often, community members and even officials do not know what natural resources exist in their jurisdiction. The Millennium Earth Project process brings citizen experience into planning and implementation.

Actionable information. The Millennium Earth Project database is relational, searchable and action-focused. It includes all agencies' and organizations' data, including informal information from observations and interviews and surveys). The database can be used for creating planning scenarios, monitoring implementation, and determining results and the extent of goal achievement. The database can also be used for tracking expenditures and programme performance. The database has an APP for official and citizen access in real time. The data can be manipulated by citizens (continuously and in periodic community meetings) for multiple planning scenarios and comparing plans with results.

Inter-agency coordination. This database increases coordination among agencies, including shared data and shared vision, with improved inter-operability and shared performance measures.

Citizen engagement. Data platform facilitates citizen participation, at all stages of decision-making, monitoring implementation, evaluation, and adjustment. Most important, this engagement is periodic (annually or more often) and iterative. Citizens learn that development is not a one-off activity, but rather engages everyone continuously and into the future.

Pilot: Case study in Manyatta A and B, Kisumu, Kenya

Kenya is a good case study for implementing The Millennium Earth Project. Kenya established the wide-spread use of mobile phones about 25 years ago. Kenya devolved substantial power from the center to the 47 counties, along with resources and personnel, including local election of the county governor. A national department of devolution supports the counties. Furthermore, recent political events have encouraged more actions and responsibilities at the county level.

For this event, data was drawn from the National Bureau of Statistics, the Regional Center for Mapping Resources for Development, the GIS departments in the county, informal data from 500 households (survey) and private data points (including observations) for example, health facilities, education institutions and water points.

In addition to the household surveys, the Millennium Earth Project process in Kisumu involved key informant interviews, focus group discussions and participatory action research (19 members chosen from the focus group discussions—three meetings on problem tree analysis and one meeting on setting priorities). Citizens were involved in the data collection and using the data. The data was transformed through GeoDesign into pictures of the community. Local people, especially students, were trained for roles in the Millennium Earth Project process.

Selected local leaders were associated with the Millennium Earth Project process. They include: elected County Governor's representative, planning department official, GIS Department official, Ward Chief (national representative in the Ward), Ward administrator

(county representative in the Ward), and representatives from Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Training involved a number of people.

- Research assistants were trained in data collection and preliminary analysis, including GIS, Questionnaires, Mobile data collection apps, GNSS, earth observation, ArcGIS, QGIS, Geo-Design. Considerations included ethical, cultural sensitivity, logistical planning and data security.
- Geospatial and spatial planning experts were trained in modeling, supporting decision-making, map creating and incorporating community inputs into geospatial models. Their training included advanced GIS techniques, Geo-AI, Remote sensing, precise and actionable geospatial analysis, and earth observation. Furthermore, they focused on bringing geospatial data to the stakeholders.
- Facilitators and reporters for the meetings were trained in focus group discussion, participatory action research situational analysis, facilitation and synthesizing. Considerations included ethical, cultural sensitivity, logistical planning and data security.
- Data analysts (scientists and statisticians) were trained to analyze and synthesize geospatial, quantitative and qualitative data, finding trends, patterns and actionable insights. They needed to learn to make popular versions of reports to enhance public engagement.
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning experts needed to learn to track proposals, access actions, and provide feedback. They also needed to focus on alignment and adaptation, as elements of the database evolved throughout the process. Considerations included ethical, cultural sensitivity, logistical planning and data security.
- Community mobilizers were trained to encourage local participation, integration of voices into activities and outcomes. They would build a bridge between the Millennium Earth Project team and the stakeholders. They would help with building consensus and conflict resolution. Considerations included ethical, cultural sensitivity, logistical planning and data security.

Effective Governance?

The Millennium Earth Project process involves single loop learning, double loop learning and triple loop learning. With single loop learning, the participants (officials and citizens) accomplish the task of setting priorities and they appreciate the results (of the first iteration). With double loop learning, they have learned and practiced enough to repeat the cycle on their own, while requesting recent data from non-county sources, thus making the process and the results sustainable. With triple loop learning, there are governance effects.

- Build the knowledge base and the social fabric (social interaction builds community, responsibility, shared data and shared risk)
- Increase transparency and accountability, thereby reducing corruption, leaving more funds for development, and making visible people and forces that try to frustrate development
- Increase citizen empowerment and trust, including state-citizen trust
- Decrease marginalization of some participants (who later run for office).

The Millennium Earth Project process illustrates how to operationalize some principles of effective governance in service to the accomplishment of the SDGs.