

Global public goods matter to developing countries

Globalization is often perceived as the world thrusting itself on communities and countries, the result of uncontrolled spillovers or international decisionmaking by only a few with impact on all. Termed by some as “bio-invasion”, “financial contagion” and “trade wars”, globalization is said to generate an ever-growing feeling of “loss of autonomy” in developing countries and “a fearful North” and “timid prosperity” in industrialized ones.

Providing Global Public Goods: Managing Globalization^{*}, a sequel to *Global Public Goods: International Cooperation in the 21st Century* (1999), is “exactly what the doctor ordered for a global public either worried about or discontented with globalization,” according to Philippines’ former Minister of Socio-Economic Planning Solita C. Monsod. James K. Galbraith of the University of Texas adds that the book provides “a founding document in efforts to come to grips with globalization” by exploring the rarely-examined, link between globalization and public goods. The clamor against globalization, the book argues, is in fact a call for better provision of public goods. That is, whether and how global public goods are provided defines whether globalization is an opportunity or a threat.

A good may be a thing (like legal framework), or condition (such as environmental stability). The public refers to the general population, civil society organizations and corporate citizens. Public goods are, thus, goods in the public domain- not necessarily state-provided – which are available for all people to access and consume freely. They may be natural commons such as the high seas, human-made public goods such as roads, irrigation systems and armies- as well as public bads like air pollution and financial contagion. State agencies and markets can also be viewed as public goods.

^{*} *Providing Global Public Goods: Managing Globalization*, edited by Inge Kaul, Pedro Conceição, Katell Le Goulven and Ronald U. Mendoza, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003.

Public goods become global when their benefits extend to all countries, people, and generations. The ozone shield, for instance, is naturally a global public good. Public goods also become global by policy choice—such as when countries adopt international strategies as in the case of curbing communicable diseases or securing property rights.

Yet today, the underprovision of public goods in one place is felt the world over. Issues such as HIV/AIDS, air pollution, financial stability, and peace bring nations into a shared fate – so too should they bring them together as partners in appropriately reformed public policymaking.

That action involves two closely related processes: political decisionmaking and the production of global public goods.

To enhance the provision of global public goods, decisionmaking needs to span borders, sectors, and groups of actors. The authors further recommend matching circles of stakeholders and decision-makers to create opportunities for all to have a say about global public goods that affect their lives.

The production of global public goods is a highly complex process. Conventional public goods such as roads and utilities are, for instance, essentially private goods that for various reasons the state sometimes chooses or is called on to provide. A number of new public goods, however, are intangible; their provision may run off course for being difficult to monitor. Environmental sustainability and food safety are two cases in point. When one considers what is at stake for the production of global public goods, these can be seen as the sum of national public goods plus international cooperation.

Globalization, the authors argue, should be managed in the presence of domestic autonomy and with the aim of achieving mutual benefit. This approach, the authors argue, would keep global public goods rooted in people's lives, as inputs to the wellbeing of local communities.

Those goals depend on the management of international spillovers. Education, for instance, promotes domestic economic growth and development. But it can also lead to slower population growth, better disease control, more stable governments, and even more peace and security. Moreover, to meet these goals at the international level, private goods and

public goods (national and global) have to be produced. Thus, global public goods are crucial inputs to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

This volume encourages further debate on how to manage globalization in a way that achieves equitable benefits for all. To do so, the authors recommend, among other things, strengthening the negotiating capacity of developing countries that mostly remain “agenda- and policy- takers”.