

## GLOBAL SOLUTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS: BEYOND INSIDER / OUTSIDER BINARIES

Anne Namatsi Lutomia, MA, Julia Bello-Bravo, PhD, and Barry Pittendrigh, PhD

### Abstract

In recent years, information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D) approaches have facilitated international development work, but still more effective ICT4D deployments are needed. This article examines how one ICT4D initiative, Scientific Animations without Borders (SAWBO), works with partners in Africa not only to transcend problematic insider / outsider binaries that impact solution delivery but also to implement inter-organizational collaborations on research and mission-critical knowledge-transfer goals that effectively reach the widest diversity of target populations.

**Keywords:** International Development; Insider/ Outsider; International Partnerships; Africa

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### INTRODUCTION

In much of the traditional literature on development, large international institutions, like the World Bank, are viewed as the principle driving force, above all in how their aid decisions shape the course of development in developing countries (Milner, 2005). More recent research has also focused on how non-governmental organizations (NGO) and community-based organizations (CBO) participate in international development as well (Anheier, 2002; Ashman, 2001). While this increase of international NGO and CBO research has resulted in a better

understanding of target populations and their needs within the development community, a major consequence has been to put a ‘human face’ on the populations otherwise targeted for aid. Moreover, while the United States (U.S.) has, for decades, been one of the most defining players in international development, non-U.S. models and development institutions in China, India, South Africa, Cuba, and others around the world now challenge and offer alternatives to this pre-eminence.

These challenges and critiques notwithstanding, a highly entrenched insider / outsider binary continues to persist for cases of U.S. donorship. While we acknowledge other models and alternatives from around the world, and welcome the several incisive critiques of U.S. models and institutions, for this paper we focus on the entrenched insider / outsider binary still dominating U.S. development. We acknowledge the narrowing of the topic this proposes and still insist that more work is needed to address this binary within its own (U.S.) context. For this paper, then, ‘insider’ refers to traditional, large-scale international institutions that accept (implicitly or explicitly) a U.S. model, while ‘outsider’ refers to NGOs, CBOs, and other local or non-traditional organizations.

While such entrenched insider / outsider collaborations stand potentially to generate tremendous opportunities for alleviating some of the world’s most pressing development issues, the complexities of such collaboration, especially around decision-making (and who makes decisions), remain considerable. Specifically, a key difficulty for international development practitioners, researchers, and funders is navigating the complex web of actors in a field without any overarching organizational framework. That is, the roles (of insiders, as international institutions that manage the world economy, outsiders, as smaller NGOs and community initiatives) between actors not always clearly defined or even in sync. Insider strategies—for example, for accomplishing the United Nations (U.N.) Sustainable Development Goals—can often contradict (less on principles and more on execution) outsider strategies in target communities. Aligning these differing agendas becomes challenging, if not impossible. As a result, insiders and outsiders often wind up working in parallel without much productive collaboration or communication. To

break down this insider / outsider binary, then, may encourage more fruitful solution delivery, outcomes, and impacts on the ground.

This paper characterizes specifically entrenched insider / outsider international development contexts in order to analyse alternative cases of mutually beneficial collaborative outcomes. We propose that this mutual benefit occurs more readily where the insider / outsider distinction itself is less sharply maintained. Moreover, information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D) approaches in particular afford manifest opportunities for development, especially for outsiders. While technologies have always facilitated international development at every level, more recent digital technologies have especially facilitated the work of NGOs in their relationships with insiders and in their impact on local development. One of the present challenges for NGOs, in fact, is how to select, collect, transform, and deploy information in an effective and appropriate manner for a given target audience. In particular, the ever-widening availability of the Internet and cellphones as common ICTs now affords outsiders access to wide-scale development initiatives to a degree not previously possible—not only in the deployment, but also on the agenda-setting, side for developmental goals and priorities. Major CSOs employing ICT4D have included the Association for Progressive Communication (APC) and the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD, 2017).

While scholars recognize that institutional insiders and outsiders alike have played a significant role in the agendas of global development, conflicting perspectives persist around the aims and intent of such efforts. Again, focusing particularly on U.S.-modelled instances of international aid, this study highlights how universities (or university-based programs) can be contexts that no longer function only as sites for the uninhibited development of modernization (N. Chomsky, Nader, Wallerstein, Lewontin, & Ohmann, 1998; Cooper, 2010) but can bridge or transcend the prevailing entrenched insider / outsider binary to yield mutually beneficial, multi-party international development. In re-examining how to assess human development, Abuya (2012) points at her previous work and urges that we should consider care—that “‘cultures of care’ can enable African leaders and institutions to re-examine our

human development agenda” (para. 7)—in alignment with work by Nussbaum (2013) and Eisler’s (2007) *The Real Wealth of Nations* specifically.

## **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS: EISLER’S CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION THEORY**

We anchor this article in Eisler’s (2015) cultural transformation theory, specifically using the partnership and domination models. According to Eisler (2015), cultural transformation theory considers “the whole span of human cultural evolution from the perspective of the tension between the contrasting configurations of the partnership system and the domination system as two underlying possibilities for structuring beliefs, institutions, and relationships” (Eisler, 2015, p. 1). This challenges traditional approaches to historical interpretation, since conventional categories of history—such as right or left, religious or secular, capitalist or socialist, Eastern or Western, Northern or Western, and industrial, pre-industrial, or post-industrial—fail to take adequate account of the totality of the institutions, assumptions, beliefs, relationships, and activities that constitute culture (Eisler, 2015). Similarly, then, notions of the global North and South or insider / outsider will similarly fall short of a complete accounting.

Alternatively, history is the result of the interaction of two evolutionary trends. Eisler (2015), for instance, tracks the interplay of androcratic (dominator) and gylanic (partnership) social forms, but neither pole of this binary is itself adequate for capturing the whole course of history. Rather, according to Eisler (2015), we can examine the structure, relations, gender system, and beliefs to understand the domination/partnership continuum. Moreover, although no system is pure partnership or dominator, the four core characteristics of domination systems especially characterize insider activities across collaborations with outsiders: 1) authoritarian rule with strict hierarchies of domination; 2) rigid predominance of males, accompanied by a devaluation of anything non-male as feminine or female activity; 3) a high degree of socially approved, even idealized abuse and violence,

especially around whose voices are heard or given authority; and 4) stories and language that require and rest on a ranking according to domination (Eisler, 2018).

Rather than these steep, dominating hierarchies in entrenched insider / outsider interactions, we propose aspects of Eisler's (2018) partnership system as offering an alternative. This partnership system has four characteristics as well: 1) a more democratic, egalitarian, and/or consensus-based structure; 2) equal partnership and more participatory structures; 3) a low degree of inbuilt violence, including an invitation and solicitation of multiple divergent voices in collaboration; and 4) and traditions of language and stories that present relations of mutual respect (Eisler, 2018).

### **Traditional Actors in International Development (Insiders)**

The U.S. model of international development can be traced in the reconstruction of Europe after the Second World War. In 1947, the U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall created a development plan, the European Recovery Program, to rebuild European economies affected by the war. Dubbed the *Marshall Plan of 1948*, it focused on rebuilding in Europe, and then switched to Asian countries, particularly Taiwan and South Korea in 1954, in order to ward off the threat of Communism. The international institutions created after World War II to help rebuild Europe and prevent further economic and security problems have since expanded their mandates and changed their mission, and currently work towards various established development goals. These international development entities include multilateral institutions, such as the World Bank, which procure aid from varying sources and distribute it through an international agency to one or more agencies, and bilateral donors, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and many other national government aid agencies, which give aid directly to a receiving country (Degnbol-Martinussen & Engberg-Pedersen, 2003). USAID is currently the largest bilateral aid agency in the world.

Other traditional actors include corporate and private foundations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Ford Foundation, which have served as major development donors for many decades, particularly in the fields of education, health care, and poverty reduction. These traditional aid organizations largely follow a classic model of U.S. modernization, rooted both in Durkheim's structural functionalism and Weber's emphasis on the importance of ideas and values for influencing social change (Djelic, 2006). This U.S. modernization model was first employed for the Marshall Plan and still integrally informs USAID and other insider international development actor approaches (Heo & DeRouen Jr, 2002; Todaro & Smith, 2003).

Modernization in this sense assumes that in order to transform societies from traditional to modern requires foreign capital and subsequently dependency on the donor state. Critics have long pointed out the detrimental effects of this dependency, arguing that it leads to income inequality, authoritarianism, inappropriate consumption, stalled development, stagnation, and corruption, effectively debt peonage and/or neo-colonialism, and marginalization of countries overlooked or bypassed for modernization itself (A. Chomsky, 2016; N. Chomsky et al., 1998; Cooper, 2010; Dabashi, 2001; Matunhu, 2011; Radhakrishnan, 2000; Taylor, 1979).

Dambisa (2009) outlines four alternative sources for funding African economies, including greater access to international markets, utilizing Chinese-modelled direct (large-scale) infrastructure investments, lobbying for free trade in agricultural products, and widening support for microfinance (pp. x-xi). According to Brautigam (2009), China offers nine types of aid, including "medical teams, training and scholarships, humanitarian aid, youth volunteers, debt relief, budget support, turn-key or 'complete plant' projects (infrastructure, factories), aid-in-kind, and technical assistance" (p. 105).

Despite many routes of proffered help, however, assistance does not always end up helping the most vulnerable people. While recent research supports the rationality

of aid in general, especially by NGOs, inefficiencies in delivery represent one of the most significant problems (Riddell, 2014). Two of the several most emphasized recommendations by Riddell (2014) suggest, in fact, that knowledge of local contexts and assessing ‘how aid can contribute more to *a recipient’s own development goals*’ (p. 1, emphasis added) are essential. Part of the reason for this continual shortfall, critics of modernization might contend, is the exploitative and androcratic hierarchies of insider / outsider binaries (Eisler, 2015) that structure interactions.

### **Non-traditional Actors in International Development: Nongovernmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations (Outsiders)**

The use of the term nongovernmental organization (NGO) was introduced in 1945, when the U.N. made a distinction between participation by intergovernmental agencies and by non-governmental-associated groups. According to the U.N. provision, an NGO was any private body independent from government control, not seeking public office, not operating for profit, and not a criminal organization (Willetts, 2002). In the United States ‘non-profit’ is a term used to signify charitable organizations that operate *locally* while ‘nongovernmental organizations’ refers to those operating *internationally*. Nonetheless, these terms are sometimes used interchangeably (Powell & Steinberg, 2006). NGOs’ strong association with international aid has steadily grown over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

NGOs have long existed in different forms, for example, as religious organizations, community groups without any relationship to the government, and development agencies (Anheier, 2002). However, during the 1920s and 1930s, the involvement of NGOs during the League of Nations gained attention and recognition from three sectors: government, business, and the general public. NGOs shifted from a status purely as outsiders to the international system towards becoming insiders as common partners of governments and other multilateral institutions.

The U.N. Charter of 1945 formalized the involvement of NGOs in U.N. activities (Charnovitz, 1997) and, since the 1990s, NGOs have exercised a marked influence at

the international level. Edwards and Hulme (1995) point out that by the mid-1990s, NGOs themselves were frequently the beneficiaries of both unilateral and bilateral organizations. This complicates the distinction between insiders and outsiders since at least some of the larger NGOs effectively straddle both categories. If these are ‘insider outsiders,’ there also are regional zones of influence where factual insiders lack influence or are otherwise politically barred from acting; we could refer to such cases as ‘outsider insiders.’

According to Lewis (2001), NGO activities can generally be categorized into three primary roles: as *implementers*, NGOs find resources to provide goods and services to individuals who need them; as *catalysts*, NGOs take action to promote social change; and as *partners*, NGOs work together with other groups and share risks and benefits. NGO attention to development increased markedly in the late 1980s as an opportunity for Western donors to channel more resources for project-based aid to reach people more flexibly at the grassroots level. NGOs were perceived as having better connections with local populations than governments or the public sector since, in some cases, they were locally-based organizations and already working within the target region.

For that reason, NGOs and other civil society organizations are often viewed as being able to buffer the interests both of the public sector and of the most disadvantaged individuals against the excesses of the state and the market, and have positioned themselves, or simply wound up, as middlemen in the discourse of international affairs (Howell & Pearce, 2001). Mitlin, Hickey, and Bebbington (2007) similarly recognize the potential of NGOs for offering alternatives to people for participating in development and social change. Batley (2011) and Rose (2011) point specifically to two distinct NGO approaches that empower impoverished populations: (1) as advocates *for* the poor and (2) those who guide the poor to be advocates for themselves.

While NGOs typically tend to have a more formalized or corporate governance structure, civil society organizations (CSOs) include a vast array of cultural

formations like associations, cooperatives, women's organizations, indigenous and immigrant populations, and some developmental NGOs. Lewis (2002) recognizes that civil society contains many, and diverse, ideas and interests, not all of which provide a positive impact on development. Although civil society can sometimes be treated interchangeably with NGOs, Shaw (1994) defined civil society not as collections of organizations like NGOs but as a 'context' where collectivities interact. To be knowledgeable about such local collectivities becomes essential for aid delivery (Riddell, 2014).

More generally, efforts to create sustainable impacts locally through international development require the participation and interaction of different actors despite differences in strategies, resources, and commitment. Frequently, this requires identifying the common or shared value, real or only professed, i.e., what the parties agree to call a mutual benefit. In the domain of global capital, where resource extraction (A. Chomsky, 2016; Kröger & Lalander, 2016), land-grabbing (Borras Jr, Hall, Scoones, White, & Wolford, 2011; Franco et al., 2013), international labor and nonlabor exploitation (Limoncelli, 2009; Lindio-McGovern & Wallimann, 2016), and disregard for ecological concerns (Kay, 2016) may make the suppression, elimination, or murder (Global Witness, 2014, 2016, September 15) of local voices seem a necessary risk in order to gain a short-term, unilateral benefit in a region, for international aid and development to exclude or overlook such local voices counts as a critical mistake (Comberti, Thornton, & Korodimou, 2016; Ojha et al., 2016), particularly in light of Riddell's (2014) recommendations.

### **Universities: A Key Link in International Development**

Universities—as sites of a more and more globally oriented education—represent an underemphasized, or only tangentially recognized, non-traditional actor within the discourse of international development. Universities produce not only the majority of human actors who occupy insider and outsider organizations but also the ideological discourse that frames the what, how, when, and why of international development.

The insider / outsider role of universities in this respect arose prior to WWII, primarily as student mobility, mostly linked to colonial arrangements designed to develop a local elite sympathetic to the economic and political interests of the colonial powers (Rizvi, 2009; Witt, 2010). Following WWII and the rise of U.S. modernization, international education offered training for foreign experts and development assistance through technology and expertise, particularly in the interests of the major competing Cold War powers (Thelin, 2004). In the United States and many other western countries, foreign aid also took the form of capacity building in international higher education (Kerr, 1991).

As such, the most common activity for U.S. institutions overseas involved development assistance programs, including U.S. higher education international programs supporting developmental goals. In general, the U.S. government has historically built bridges to foreign institutions through intellectual elites, many of whom were alumni of U.S. institutions (Wiley & Root, 2003). From the early 1980s, however, a market-driven model made international programming increasingly subject to market factors, often driven by neo-liberal assumptions (Rizvi, 2009). While the previous era's bridge-building continued, the greater ability of capital to slip beyond national boundaries similarly loosened the appeal of bridge-building rhetoric; the end of the Cold War helped to accelerate this.

At present, the new models for international education typically concatenate elements from previous models—e.g., the social and cultural development of the post-WWII model for capacity building and international relations of bridge-building—with a greater emphasis on individual development fostered by the market model, with its emphasis on global competition, brand management, and revenue creation for institutions. This is not just a collage, however, since the admixture of elements has generated distinctions in both form and function; as Gürüz (2008) notes, “with the advent of the global knowledge economy ... new rationales have emerged, or the classical ones have assumed new dimensions and contents” (pp. 140-141). Some of these include exchanges of students and faculty, joint research and technology initiatives, faculty development efforts, collaboration in quality

assurance, the sharing of technology, and above all remote technological integration (Sakamoto & Chapman, 2011; Sutton & Obst, 2011).

Community and university engagements in international development efforts also have become more common, especially as scholars increasingly engage in globally-minded research aimed at addressing the world's most pressing challenges, from climate change to global pandemics (Hall, 2013; MacPherson & Hall, 2011). Universities are at the intersection of innovations in technology, knowledge exchange, and capacity building, and are therefore well positioned to play an active role in international development work. Many universities in developing countries are increasingly under pressure from their governments and multilateral organizations to work with communities and international partners to provide solutions for their nations' most pressing problems. Hall (2013) wrote that the creation of knowledge is linked to the construction of economic development; both are needed to produce sustainable communities. Constructive partnerships between actors with similar objectives are also necessary to support the building of healthy communities. Hall (2013) highlights how partnerships can bring engagement, participation, opportunities, and impact to even the most impoverished communities around the world.

Despite the increasing interaction between academic institutions and NGOs in the field of international development, little research exists on these collaborations. Roper (2002) focuses on the cultural and intellectual clashes between academics and NGOs practitioners. Advocating for a holistic approach, Roper (2002) calls for collaborative partners to take responsibility for understanding and learning about each other in order to bridge the gap between the different approaches each partner brings to the table. Chambers (2005) concentrates on participatory research methodologies in development, specifically the impact of NGOs on the ground and the rhetoric of donor organizations. The different participatory approaches Chambers (2005) identifies might well lead to the empowerment of communities, so long as all stakeholders recognize the importance of determining any selected approach and the implementation process polyvocally, pluralistically.

## **THE SAWBO CASE STUDY: EXAMINING DIFFERENT INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP MODELS**

Kruss (2006) defines knowledge-intensive strategies as certain complex network forms of collaboration within both higher educational and industry settings that are shaped by intellectual imperatives. These strategies exhibit a strong focus on research and innovation, and typically employ network and collaborative forms that aim at for mutual benefit for all partners involved. Scientific Animations Without Borders (SAWBO) represents one such collaborative, knowledge-intensive network.

SAWBO is now a Michigan State University-based program launched in 2011 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Co-created and co-managed by Julia Bello-Bravo and Barry Pittendrigh, it aims to promote agricultural, health, and women's empowerment by sharing knowledge with people of all literacy levels and linguistic backgrounds throughout the world. As part of its collaborative process, SAWBO reaches out to global experts on specific topics in order to assist in the development of a script and storyboard for a two- to five-minute 2D or 3D animation. These animations are both scientifically accurate and translated and overdubbed into local dialects to be easily accessible and understandable for users of all literacy levels in an area. The resulting brief animation is then freely available (both online and offline) to anyone who desires to use it for educational purposes.

The SAWBO project was inspired by the fact of upwards of one billion low-literate learners who are otherwise highly fluent in highly divergent mother tongues around the globe. Many of these individuals live in rural areas and do not have access to otherwise critical or life-improving knowledge available in academic literature and print documents. SAWBO is an academic (scientifically based) and practical exploration into how to deliver such needed information with the highest throughput and in the most cost-effective way.

As a university-based program, SAWBO's immediate practical output involves the creation of (1) short, downloadable, scientifically validated best practices-informed animated videos on a variety of health, agricultural, and other subjects, then enhanced by (2) a voice-over localized to the prevailing dialect of any given target population. Each video represents the culmination of a specific nexus of partnerships that develops heuristically, not only as needed but also through the emergence of unforeseen forms of partnerships with local knowledge experts and practice. These partnerships are characterized by shared goals, mutual respect, support, and shared information. This process integrally includes local voices—including the videos' users, who have (in past deployments) provided critical insight and guidance on how to create more effective videos in the future. As such, it is collaboratively more gylanic than androcratic in orientation (Eisler, 2015).

Moreover, SAWBO is a scientific project both in terms of its practice and its theory; that is, it takes an empirical approach to testing the effectiveness of its videos as well as an anti-dogmatic attitude with respect to the theory or theoretical approach informing its efforts. *What works for those targeted for help* is its most essential criteria in its overall effort to characterize generalizable principles of knowledge transfer that maintain efficacy across several cultural domains. This too is more of a gylanic than androcratic approach, in that it does not solely or hierarchically prioritize SAWBO's institutionality but also prioritizes the actual needs and wants of those helped. In the case study that follows, the values, frameworks, and theories that inform SAWBO practice are, like all scientific knowledge, working models, which were adopted because they empirically facilitate SAWBO's work, not because they are true, necessary, or ideologically appealing.

Moreover, as an insider / outsider (NGO-university) hybrid organization, SAWBO provides a unique perspective on international development collaboration. As part of a major research university, it benefits from direct access to global scholarship and insider patronage, yet many of the program's activities (including product creation, training, and deployment in the field) more resemble grassroots, local NGO

efforts intended to address problems in their local form. Thus, SAWBO's mission involves both (1) engaging global and local experts from different disciplines towards the construction of educational/informational research materials, and (2) researching, creating, translating, and disseminating those materials through relationships built with other groups.

This case study case specifically describes SAWBO's partnership model with three groups it has partnered with: a scientific NGO in Benin, a university in Ethiopia, and a consultancy NGO in Ghana. In discussing the cases, the following criteria from Eisler's (2015) shift from domination to partnership forms are central:

- Partnership systems, as contrasted with domination systems, create connections with individuals, communities, and institutions based on constructive and cooperatively competitive hierarchies.
- Whole systems looks are needed because otherwise "we cannot see the connections between [the system's] various components—just as if we look at only part of a picture, we cannot see the relationship between its different parts" (Eisler, 2015, p. 4).

### **SAWBO and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)**

Since 2011, SAWBO has collaborated with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) to conduct research and deploy educational videos on agriculture topics in Africa. IITA is a non-profit NGO, governed by a board of trustees and supported by several countries as well as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR, 2017). IITA works with partners to enhance crop quality and productivity, reduce producer and consumer risks, and generate wealth from agriculture, with the ultimate goal of reducing hunger, malnutrition, and poverty.

In Benin, SAWBO and IITA partnered on research comparing farmers' learning gains and reactions to animated educational video messaging versus traditional extension agent lecture/demonstrations. Video animations were found to be equally as, or

more effective, than traditional methods and much more highly preferred by participants (Bello-Bravo, Tamò, Dannon, & Pittendrigh, 2018). Data and findings from this joint research venture not only better addressed the needs of the specific Beninese communities involved, but also generally informed future SAWBO animated video content development for use in broader international development knowledge messaging efforts.

### **SAWBO and Adama Science and Technology University Partnership**

Established in 2006, Ethiopia's University of Adama Science and Technology (ASTU) has a mandate to train technical teachers and work with communities through outreach and service-oriented community engagement. In 2008, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education nominated ASTU as a Center of Excellence in Technology, inaugurating a new applied engineering and technology program.

Aligning with these missions, ASTU partnered with SAWBO and local others—including *kebeles* ('wards' 'neighbourhood associations'), *woredas* ('districts'), non-profit organizations, extension agents, health care providers, and other actors in Ethiopia—to provide learning opportunities for students and local community development. As a local, almost grassroots, initiative, this international partnership did not connect directly to insider funding despite the shared insider value of education for international development.

This SAWBO/ASTU partnership exemplifies how two public universities (bridging across developed and developing nations) can coordinate with local communities to achieve development goals held in common by insiders and outsiders. While students and communities alike engaged in collaborative learning, discussed peer-to-peer scientific concepts, and offered solutions to communities in partnership with SAWBO, benefits mutually accrued to SAWBO as well, particularly in the way that the overall process informed any similar future partnerships (Bello-Bravo, Olana, & Pittendrigh, 2015). For ASTU as well, the partnership resulted in access to government funding to do extension work through the university, thus funding ongoing project work for ASTU after its formal relationship with SAWBO ended.

### **SAWBO and Non-Governmental Organization Partnership: Centre for Learning and Community Development (CLCD) in Ghana**

Founded in 2010, the Centre for Learning and Community Development (CLCD), an NGO in Ghana, has a mission to alleviate poverty through education for leadership, public health, and agricultural innovation. In 2013, CLCD piloted an information and communication technology (ICT) training program using SAWBO video animations with farmers in Accra, Ghana. A principal messaging topic of this knowledge campaign involved improved integrated pest management (IPM) techniques utilizing a more economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable non-synthetic pesticide (neem extract) as an alternative to synthetic pesticides (SAWBO, 2017).

Besides sustainability gains for local farmers, SAWBO also benefited from these efforts by better understanding what appeals and does not appeal to farmers around neem use. For CLCD, it has since more broadly collaborated with other partners—e.g., Germany’s Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Ghana Cocoa Board, The World Cocoa Foundation, the Ministry of Agriculture, and others—to draw them into its knowledge-intensive network (Kruss, 2006) with SAWBO in order to scale up its original mandate to serve communities in multiple locations across Ghana.

### **TOWARDS A NEW DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

The SAWBO partnerships above have afforded considerable flexibility and integration of the participating communities and development actors. Such flexibility enables participation by global *and* local experts in the design, implementation, and evaluation of educational materials, even at the early stages of a specific partnership. While requiring more ‘front end’ time and effort—particularly around locating, coordinating, and connecting the knowledge pool needed to scientifically and socially address a problem—digital connectedness now greatly increases the ability of actors to effect such wide-ranging networking compared to previous eras. Drawing on these new capacities, three main components particularly sustain

SAWBO's hybrid insider / outsider system approach to collaboration as an alternative to entrenched, androcratic insider / outsider interactions:

- Working with global and local experts to create scientifically accurate content on diverse core areas of agriculture, health, and women's empowerment. Collaboration includes local dialect experts (not necessarily from the academic caste) for translating educational materials into locally appropriate and dialectically accurate languages.
- Maintaining a growing library of such educational materials on current and emergent problems facing communities around the world.
- Enabling online and offline access to this library, through compact, readily downloadable, easily cellphone-shared video files. In this way, anyone with a video-enabled cellphone can access and effectively deploy these educational materials to target populations regardless of their geographic remoteness, technological illiteracy, or sociodemographic barriers like age, gender, or educational level (Bello-Bravo, Zakari, Baoua, & Pittendrigh, 2018).

Creating educational materials and finding appropriate groups to deploy to and receive that information does not distinguish SAWBO from other similar projects; rather, being responsive to feedback at all steps of a collaborative interaction does. More particularly, in the scientific spirit, SAWBO does not just listen but learns from its partners and clients. As such, challenges in this partnership system involve formal coordination among the different groups, given varying levels of technology, infrastructure, and available political organization, but also the deeper problem of sometimes not knowing what questions to ask or that a question even needs to be asked. Opening partnerships up to a variety of actors (whether at the technical level when developing the content of a video, or at the implementation level when deploying the videos) affords the possibility of such unknown questions coming to light, often with typically breakthrough consequences.

More generally, this openness to feedback for outcomes (and people) simply embodies the humility of science itself and a willingness to ask rather than to pretend to know. In many cases, (local) NGOs and civil society already have the capacity to identify constraints and provide solutions at the local level, if only those who come bearing the torch to help are willing to ask.

## **CONCLUSION**

We have grounded our analysis above on Eisler's (2015) cultural transformation theory, especially around the contrast of partnership and domination models, in order to contrast a hybrid insider / outsider organizational structure in SAWBO that flattens otherwise typically destructive and entrenched insider/outside interactions in U.S. international development. As Eisler (2015) noted that partnership structures are not necessarily void of hierarchy and competition (though these are of a more productive, and less destructive, variety), so too have the entrenched U.S. insider / outsider patterns of modernization not been without their economic gains and advances (even if the pertinent question, "But at what cost?" can still be asked). That is, in seeking to move beyond these entrenched patterns of insider / outsider binaries, we do not intend simply to reproduce them at another level.

Crocker (1991) observed that development practitioners should draw on both insider and outsider perspectives in order to learn from each other and best achieve mutually beneficial goals. Emergent actors—such as new organizations at universities in general but also programs like SAWBO housed at public academic institutions—occupy a unique position able to integrate and adapt the large-scale agendas of insiders in more participatory ways to the local particularities and agendas of outsiders. This is important, since the premises of sustainability require that non-traditional and overlooked groups be afforded a preeminent place in discussions and decision-making not only about offered help that affects them (United Nations, 2015) but also that affects the whole world.

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Anne Namatsi Lutomia, MA, is a doctoral candidate at University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign in the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership and studies Human Resource Development. Her current research looks at North-South scientific collaboration, specifically the processes of collaboration in a project based in the U.S. and Benin. Her research interest spans scientific collaboration, leadership development, adult learning, mobile learning, and global knowledge production and gender issues. Anne is a recipient of the Maria Pia Gratton International Award.

Julia Bello-Bravo, PhD, is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Food Sciences and Human Nutrition at Michigan State University and a co-founder and co-director of Scientific Animations Without Borders (SAWBO). Dr. Bello-Bravo's research interests lie at the intersection of effective communication and education, specializing in informal education and communication strategies to reach low- or non-literate learners in developing and developed countries. Areas of research include identifying, developing, and deploying scalable strategies for effective educational knowledge transfer and solution uptake to the approximately 800 million low- and non-literate dozen countries to date—investigating the appeal and learning gains delivered by animated educational videos viewed on mobile phones. Future research includes developing further means to scale up this educational delivery, to increase throughput and access for anyone with a video-enabled cellphone and access to the Internet who wishes to share educational knowledge learners globally. Much of her research involves rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa—more than a in their own community; to collaborate further with global and local knowledge-holders in the development of locally feasible solutions to problems affecting countless communities globally; and especially to empower the disempowered, disenfranchised, marginalized, or simply overlooked people at a grassroots level so as to enable everyone's access to more economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable solutions to problems facing them and the world.

Barry Pittendrigh, PhD, is an MSU Foundation Professor at Michigan State University (2016-present) and previously held the C.W. Kerns, C.L. Metcalf and W.P. Flint Endowed Chair at University of Illinois (2008-2016). Dr. Pittendrigh received his PhD from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1999 and held a Max Planck Fellowship at the Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology (1999-2000) before becoming a faculty member at Purdue University in West Lafayette from 2000-2008 (Assistant/Associate Professor). He has worked in cropping systems in Africa for over 15 years. He is both a co-founder and co-director of Scientific Animations Without Borders (SAWBO).

Correspondence on this article should be addressed to Anne Namatsi Lutomia at [lutomia1@illinois.edu](mailto:lutomia1@illinois.edu)