

Shorter Notice

Luc J. A. Mougeot (editor). *Putting Knowledge to Work—Collaborating, Influencing, and Learning for International Development.* Warwickshire, U.K.: Practical Action Publishing. 2017. 200 pages. U.K. £18.95 (Paperback).

The book, “Putting Knowledge to Work” is a collection of essays that address various aspects of the role of civil society in international development. Although the book is written from the perspective of the Canadian civil society organisation (CSOs), it is useful for the practitioners and academics located in the other countries in the Global North. The contributors of the book are professionals who have experience of working in academia and for NGOs, lending the book diversity and richness. In general, the book argues for more knowledge-driven role of the civil society to remain relevant for international development. The book gives a comprehensive overview of how the different relationships (funding, collaboration, influence) between development actors (donors, recipients, partners, stakeholders, and beneficiary communities) interact with one another to affect how knowledge is generated and applied. One of the key messages of the book is that knowledge is only useful if it is timely, relevant, and practicable. Apart from an introductory and a concluding chapter, the book comprises of four chapter. After the introductory chapter, chapter 2 examines the Global North donors’ influence on the agenda-setting of Global-South recipients. It presents a comprehensive appraisal of the political economy of North-South development research partnerships. Chapter 3 looks at how collaboration between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and universities can be nurtured. The analysis in the chapter reveals that working together, NGOs and universities collaborate prudently and take their collaboration to the next level only when it is mutually beneficial. The focus of chapter 4 is on the strategies that international NGOs use, with Global South NGOs to apply knowledge to influence attitudes, practices, and policies. The role of learning is also stressed in this chapter. It argues that for CSOs and funders to support innovation, there needs to be more exchange between domestic and internationally engaged organisations and a more explicit recognition and communication by CSOs to others, funders included, of the role of research throughout their strategy for change. Chapter 5 takes this discussion further and emphasises the role of small- and medium-sized NGOs in this regard. The chapter identifies the elements required for effective learning, planning, and processes at the headquarters level that support fieldwork and knowledge capture. The concluding chapter synthesises the findings of the essays and it also identifies gaps that need to be filled through further exploration. For example, the concluding chapter highlights that there is a growing range of disciplinary fields whose curriculum now includes international development issues and we need to know how the students and faculty from the diverse fields, such as journalism, technology, and engineering, among others, engage with development CSOs. [Omer Siddique].

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