

LEADERSHIP AND POWER IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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LEADERSHIP AND POWER IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Navigating the Intersections of
Gender, Culture, Context, and
Sustainability

Edited by

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2018

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-1-78754-116-0 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-78743-880-4 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-78743-999-3 (Epub)

ISSN: 2058-8801



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standard
ISO 14001:2004.

Certificate Number 1985
ISO 14001



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Gordon A. Zook earned a BS in Food Systems Economics and Management from Michigan State University, an MS in Agriculture Economics from Cornell University, and more recently a PhD in Organizational Leadership from Eastern University. He has worked for Mennonite Central Committee for 18 years in Bangladesh, Haiti, and India along with his wife Carol, primarily in country program leadership. His primary interest focuses on assessing and improving organizational effectiveness, particularly for international NGOs.

PREFACE

We talk about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which for me is excellent! As individuals working in international development, have we taken the time to think and talk about our Personal Development Goals (PDGs)? Do we demonstrate on a daily basis how our day-to-day activities contribute to the achievement of the SDGs? Be the change you want to see in the global space? Let us build our personal capacities for global action!

Benjamin Kofi Quansah¹

The United Nations' call in 2015 to work together to achieve 17 sustainable development goals by 2030 has reignited the global discussion regarding the need to continue to improve the lives of a large part of the developing world. Leaders in international development face an enormous challenge to coordinate their actions, bring resources to bear, and determine the most successful approach to achieve the vision implied by the SDGs. How leaders should best lead becomes a critical question.

We decided to pursue this volume because we saw a gap in the leadership literature related to leaders in international development. Such leaders have been included in the literature on project management to a certain extent, but we believe that their leadership extends far beyond the realm of projects. We also believe that leaders in international development, as significant as they are in determining the future of the global order, have not been acknowledged adequately in the academic, practitioner, or public milieus.

Based on our belief that models and theories of leadership should be built up by practice and that personal reflection is a powerful approach to understanding practice, we put out a call for proposals that asked contributors to write their leadership stories. Furthermore, we asked authors to highlight particular leadership moments and examine those moments in terms of four factors which we determined were key in this profession: gender, context, culture, and sustainability. We were interested to determine whether their

gender influenced their leadership, especially since leaders in this profession encounter a wide divergence of attitudes toward gender in the countries in which they work. We wondered whether the social, economic, political, or personal context in which they lead impacted their leadership. Culture, of course, is a huge factor in international development leadership and we wanted contributors to reflect on how they adapt their leadership to different cultures and how they cross borders and develop agility to move from one culture to another. Lastly, since a key focus for international development currently is on sustainable development, we wanted leaders to inform us how this focus has impacted their leadership.

Of the many proposals submitted by international development leaders in response to our call for chapters, we selected 18 leaders based on their extensive and sustained work in the international development field. The 14 women and four men originate from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America, and they represent a diverse array of cultures, leadership histories, and perspectives. Their leadership roles differ and include a former senior-level government official from a developing country; a humanitarian aid worker; a policy maker in influential donor organizations and the United Nations; leaders in faith-based organizations; project implementers in bilateral aid organizations, non-government organizations, and corporations; university professors; a physician; an interculturalist; and an HR executive in a development organization. The diversity of the authors has provided a kaleidoscope of perspectives that together offer a comprehensive view of leadership in international development. Some surprises emerged such as the need for leaders in international development to challenge culture, not only adapt to it. These leaders had to decide to work with existing power structures or try to change them. Expatriate women as a sort-of “third gender” in some countries and the paradoxes that are a constant reality for leaders in this profession, were among another surprise.

From the rich stories of the complexities, uncertainties, pressures, and victories of the authors, we closely reviewed each chapter in a comparative manner to identify commonalities, differences, themes, and patterns. The process we used bridges the practitioner/scholar divide by offering a tentative framework for leading in international development based on actual practitioner stories from the field. Typical qualitative research data analysis methods were used, including the use of qualitative data analysis software and modified grounded theory methods. The result is the presentation, in

Chapter 1, of a tentative model or theory of leading in international development contexts.

Our intention and hope is that this volume will initiate a new dialogue between practitioners and scholars in this important area of leadership and that both emerging and veteran leaders in this profession will gain valuable insights from the chapters.

Randal Joy Thompson
Julia Storberg-Walker
Editors

NOTE

1. Benjamin Kofi Quansah, CGMS, is a Ghanaian leader in international development. In 2017, he was awarded the prestigious 2017 Newton award from the US National Grants Management Association for his outstanding contribution and performance in the field of grants management. This quote was retrieved from: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/international-development>.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF THE EDITORS

The journey of putting together this volume has been made possible and immeasurably more enriched by the support and commitment of a number of individuals to whom we are deeply indebted. The honest self-reflection and commitment to the betterment of the world of the chapter authors have made this book both possible and promising. We as editors have benefitted from a life-enhancing learning process catalyzed by the leadership stories of these contributors.

The editors also owe a huge debt of eternal gratitude to Debra DeRuyver, Communications Director of the International Leadership Association (ILA). Debra was with us every step of the way, offering sound advice and guidance based on her many years of experience. We also would like to thank the staff of ILA for their faith in us and support for our work. We hope we met the expectations of Cynthia Cherry, CEO, who announced our book at the 2017 ILA Conference in Brussels. We are ever thankful to Shelly Wilsey, COO, for her wordsmithing and Bridget Chisholm, Director of Conferences. They and the rest of the ILA staff provided the foundation for making this book possible and providing us with the opportunity to make an impact.

We would also like to acknowledge all the readers of this volume who we invite to join us on this journey of exploration of leadership in international development. We look forward to engaging in a dialogue with all of you and in advancing our understanding of the factors influencing leadership in this profession as well as the values, principles, and competences that will help us all work together for a better world.

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ABOUT THE EDITORS

Randal Joy Thompson is an International Development Professional and Founder and Principal of the consulting company Excellence, Equity, and Empowerment. As a US Foreign Service Officer for 28 years, she advised senior government officials on policy changes and helped to change systems to improve health, child welfare, education, social science research, and program evaluation in all regions of the world. As a Certified Performance Technologist, she has also worked to improve organizational and human performance. She has chapters in *Breaking the Zero-Sum Game: Transforming Societies Through Inclusive Leadership*; *Grassroots Leadership and the Arts for Social Change*; *Theorizing Women & Leadership: New Insights & Contributions from Multiple Perspectives*; and *Women and Leadership Around the World* and many academic journals and books.

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DEDICATIONS

To all my Colleagues and Friends in International Development who have dedicated their lives to creating a better world and to those I worked with who were murdered doing so, including James Foley and
Lisa Marie Akbari.

And to my sons Devin and Patrick who grew up around the world, are true survivors – Devin of an attempted coup in Cameroon and Patrick of an attempted murder in Ukraine – and are leaders in their own right, working toward justice and equality.

Randal Joy

I dedicate this book to all of the leaders who get up every day in the name of peace and equality. “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” – Gandhi

Julia

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OVERVIEW PART 1

ON LEADING IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Randal Joy Thompson

Leaders in international development work on the cutting edge of the global order, striving to create a world where everyone can live a life of dignity with access to resources and services to meet their fundamental needs. Such leaders rarely have the chance to tell their stories. How they lead most effectively in various contexts and cultures has not often been told, nor have the qualities and approaches they employ to achieve success been systematically studied. The purpose of this volume, then, is to fill this gap by sharing these stories and proposing a tentative theory of leading in this context. In addition, the volume offers an innovative practitioner/scholar collaboration model for generating new knowledge directly from the stories and anecdotes of leaders.

We (the co-editors) decided to combine our practitioner and scholar skills and together developed a vision for this unique volume. Chapter 1, *Toward a Theory of Leading in International Development*, describes the specific steps undertaken to combine research and practice; our goal was to create a vehicle for stories from this leadership area and then analyze the stories to identify commonalities, differences, and critical leadership issues. From the analysis, our goal was to offer a tentative new theory of leading in this context that can be used to inform future research and leader development initiatives. As Chapter 1, *Toward a Theory of Leading in International Development*, makes clear, the leader stories provided a rich depth of leader

experiences to draw from, and a new theory of leading in this context is offered.

Leadership and Power in International Development: Navigating the Intersections of Gender, Culture, Context, and Sustainability provides 18 leaders from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America working in various aspects of international development the opportunity to describe their challenges, successes, and failures in leading change in different countries, different sectors, and at various levels, including national, local, and individual. This overview illustrates the complexities related to leading in this context. We believe that this under-researched area is a critical area for leadership scholars and practitioners, and as such we seek to shed light on key elements of this profession. Specifically, this overview provides a brief examination of leading in international development and then provides a brief discussion of some of the specific issues and experiences faced by the authors in this volume.

The first section, entitled “On International Development Leaders,” posits a preliminary definition of what leaders in international development do. The second section, entitled “The Architecture within which International Development Leaders Lead” describes the organizational context of their leadership. “Approaches to International Development,” the third section, summarizes different approaches to achieving development that leaders have implemented over the years. The fourth section, “How do the Leaders in This Volume Practice Leadership?” highlights leaders’ conception of leadership as well as their reflections on the four factors we initially identified as possibly influencing leadership in this profession, namely gender, culture, context, and sustainability. Power emerged as a dominant factor in leadership in international development in virtually all the stories of the authors. In the Overview Part 2, Anne M. Spear presents an overview of the broader context of the issue of power in this domain and a commitment by the authors to a leadership practice that sincerely focuses on equalizing power relations and creating global harmony.

The introductions to each of the five parts of the volume also highlight some of the key findings regarding leadership in international development. Part 1, Challenges in International Development, of the volume includes stories that introduce the reader to some of the most common challenges faced by leaders in international development. Part 2, Leadership for Women’s Empowerment and Equity, describes the leadership moments of

leaders who have devoted their career to promoting women's empowerment and equity. Part 3, Spirit-filled Grassroots Leadership, describes leadership by faith-based leaders who work at the grassroots level. Part 4, Leading Major Donor Projects, contains stories by leaders who work for major donors or their projects. Finally, Part 5, Leadership Lessons to Reflect On, provides leadership lessons for the reader to reflect on.

ON INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEADERS

Who Are Leaders in International Development?

One of the hopes of this volume is to initiate a conversation about how to conceive of a leader in international development. At this point, we begin with the assertion that *a leader in international development is a change maker dedicated to transforming complex systems and their components in developing countries (and by implication in the global world) such that all individuals in the world can live in equitable societies, free from want, able to achieve their aspirations, and in harmony with the environment.*

What Is Unique about These Leaders?

What leaders do in international development is unique in many respects. When expatriates, they cross sovereign borders, bringing know-how, resources, and technologies, as well as principles, values, assumptions, ways-of-doing things, and worldviews to bear on the change they wish to make in the developing countries in which they work. What they bring with them may clash with what leaders in developing countries carry or what the society can manage and adjust to. They often represent a power and privilege imbalance, the result of which can appear overbearing and authoritarian and arrogant. They may be offering an unwelcome change or a change only supported by certain groups in the developing countries. They can disrupt power relations and cultural norms that either will be resisted or may cause instability. When leaders of development come from within their own countries, they may represent certain powerful groups that may oppose providing benefits to groups that could disrupt the power hegemony. Or, they may come from disenfranchised groups that may threaten the powers-that-be.

These various characteristics of what leaders in international development do and who they are, the impact of their leadership, and their effectiveness are explored by various authors in their chapters.

THE ARCHITECTURE WITHIN WHICH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEADERS LEAD

Leaders in international development lead within a complex global architecture of international and national organizations established shortly after World War II, which has evolved over the years through various phases driven by changing theories of how to catalyze international development and alter geo-political relationships as well as by vehement critiques of the sometimes negative impact of the practice of development on the lives of its beneficiaries. Although human, financial, and material resources and know-how have traversed global boundaries throughout history by migrations, cross-border trade, conquests, war, technical assistance, humanitarian aid, and religious zeal, the contemporary era of “international development” and “foreign aid” is generally considered to have begun with the words of US President Harry S. Truman delivered in his Inaugural Address on January 20, 1949:

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery... Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas... Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. (Truman, 1949)

International development or global development historically has been closely linked to the concept of economic growth, although its definition has been broadened over the years to include human development and, more recently, sustainable development. Such development is directed by the policies, programs, knowledge, and resources within developing countries augmented by transfers of financial, technological, informational, and human resources from more developed ones. Leaders in international development are responsible for these transfers.

At the time of Truman's speech, the foundational architecture of international organizations that would play key roles in international development and foreign aid had already been built with the creation in 1944 of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (now part of the World Bank Group), and in 1945 the United Nations. Further, the Marshall Plan for the Reconstruction of Europe was initiated and the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) was created in 1948 to administer the Plan. The Marshall Plan served as a significant step forward in the advent of international development by focusing on the provision of technical and humanitarian assistance while at the same time creating a political and economic bloc opposed to the Soviet Union that would play an important role in international development henceforth. The conceptual foundation of development during this period and during the 1950s was the modernization theory posited by Walt Rostow and other American economists (Rostow, 1960, 1990).

Foreign Aid as an Essential Tool of International Development

The 1960s era of the independence of former colonies marked the advent of Western countries creating foreign aid organizations. Canada, France, and the United States led the way and other countries followed suit in subsequent years. In the United States of America, an advocate of foreign aid, President John F. Kennedy pushed for the enactment of the Foreign Assistance Act in 1961 that established the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The establishment of USAID by Kennedy ushered in a new stage of development in the US. Kennedy's 1961 Alliance for Progress focused on increasing gross national product (GNP), establishing democratic governments, ending adult illiteracy, land reform, and social planning guaranteed by US\$20 billion.

Whereas predecessor US agencies such as the Technical Cooperation Agency, the Institute of Inter-American Affairs, and the US Department of Agriculture doled out highly technical programs, USAID required a new kind of development professional. No longer "well drillers" who worked at the community level, the new professionals were economists, loan officers, planners, senior technical advisors, private sector business executives, and professionals who could undertake policy discussions with ministers and heads of

nations (Askin, 2012, p. 29). Development became the focus of “studies, theories, and program approaches and helped usher in what many later characterized as the ‘Golden Age of Development’” (Askin, 2012, p. 30).

Given the advent of bilateral aid donors, the Development Assistance Group (DAG) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was established on January 13, 1960, in order to track aid flows of its members to developing countries. The OEEC was reorganized in 1961 to become the OECD, whose 35 members from mostly high-income countries include some non-Western states. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) was the renamed version of the DAG and focused on promoting development policies to improve economic and social well-being as well as to track resource flows, analyze data to predict future trends, and set international standards.

The United Nations agencies have also played a key role in international development. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and others have developed key international policies and negotiated with governments to make changes for the betterment of their people.

The architecture has evolved over the years as previously so-called developing countries have become middle-income countries and emerging powers and have become donors in their own right. Further, developing countries have increasingly formed a “Southern bloc” to negotiate for more effective aid and a stronger role in managing it, through the Aid Effectiveness movement and resultant Paris Declaration, Accra Accord, Busan Partnership Agreement, and the Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

Multiple Identities of Donors

Within the international architecture of international development, donors are generally categorized into multilateral, bilateral, non-governmental, corporate, and individuals. Multilateral donors, whose funds come from many countries, include the UNDP, the World Bank, and international development banks, among many others. Bilateral donors represent individual countries. Currently, the DAC members are the largest donors. However, China

is a growing donor as is India, Brazil, Mexico, and several of the Arab states.

International Non-government Organizations (INGOs) include Oxfam, Save the Children, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, CARE, Mercy Corps, and hundreds of others, funded by a combination of donations and government funds. Missionary groups are also generally included in this category. Private foundations and philanthropic donors include, among many others, the foundations of ex-US presidents such as the Carter Center, the Clinton Foundation, and the Obama Foundation, and private philanthropic foundations such as the Soros, Rockefeller, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundations. Many national non-government organizations (NGOs) also serve as donors.

In addition to the above donors, there are a myriad of private sector organizations that deliver aid provided by multilateral and bilateral donors and who work on the front lines of delivering aid directly to developing countries through a number of different funding mechanisms that will be discussed later. Corporations also have social responsibility strategies that are considered as aid. Further, private corporations provide the majority of resource transfers in recent years from developed to developing countries to stimulate international development, but those transfers are not considered as official aid.

Leaders work in all these various types of organizations and at all levels of this system, including political decision makers, policy makers, program designers, and project implementers in the field. The authors in this volume include leaders who work or have worked for developing country governments, for developing country development organizations, for major multilateral and bilateral donors, and for international and national non-governmental organizations. They have led at the political level, the policy level, the organizational level, the community level, and the individual level.

APPROACHES TO INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Depending upon what part of the development architecture they work in, leaders in international development either influence changes in or respond to changes in the currently popular approaches to development assistance. They also develop projects and other mechanisms to implement the currently

popular approach. Approaches to such assistance have evolved since the Marshall Plan. The decades of development, hence, have been variously characterized. The technical expertise of leaders throughout these various periods has sometimes changed as has the concept of what types of interventions truly lead to the betterment of humanity and society. The magic key to development has yet to be found in this practice. A brief but not exhaustive summary of the overarching approaches is provided below in order to frame the intellectual context within which leaders in this profession have worked.

Although conceived to serve particular political agendas, until the 1990s, development assistance has been treated as a purely technical endeavor (Carothers & De Gramont, 2013; Eyben, 2014). Development professionals, including an array of strategic planners, economists, agronomists, public administration experts, and public health and education experts, purposefully eschewed the political and considered international development as catalyzed by technical innovation and know-how. In the 1950s and 1960s, the emphasis was on stimulating economic growth in the Third World, hoping that “fostering economic development in poor countries would inoculate them from leftist [i.e., Communist] subversion” (Carothers & De Gramont, 2013, p. 256). Thinkers in the developing countries and newly independent colonies began to identify “dependency theory,” which contended that resource flows from the developing world to the developed world exceeded those in the opposite direction due to prejudicial terms of trade and that development assistance exacerbated this inequality, resulting in the unfair exploitation of developing country resources by donor-countries (Carothers & De Gramont, 2013; Eyben, 2014).

In the early 1970s, criticism swelled against the strictly macro-economic and industrialization approach of early international development, contending that the quality of the populace’s life was not being improved. The basic needs approach emerged with sectors such as health and education, and micro-technology being highlighted as critical to development. Development professionals also began to promote programs directed at women, who heretofore had been the invisible beneficiaries of development assistance.

The 1980s marked the inception of the market centered, neoliberal economic era. Development assistance focused on restructuring the economic systems of developing nations to foster private sector development and minimize the state’s expenses for the provision of the social safety net. This was the era of the IMF’s structural adjustment loans, which offered money for

meeting strict economic restructuring. A countermovement took place at the same time that promoted “bottom up approaches” including appropriate technology and Rapid and/or Participatory Rural Appraisal, an empowerment approach currently employed by two of the authors in this volume. Complex, integrated community development projects became popular. Increasingly, emphasis was also placed on integrating women into mainstream development programs, including as private sector entrepreneurs.

During the 1990s, post-communist period, capitalism was assumed to be the dominant global paradigm. Poverty became the focus of development rhetoric and programs. Efforts were made to establish public–private partnerships and to incorporate private capital into the development assistance mix. Politics finally became an open strategy. As [Carothers and De Gramont \(2013, pp. 257–258\)](#) explained: “Faced with the frequent experience of market policies floundering in developing countries because of weak state capacity to implement reforms, endemic corruption, and inadequate legal protections for market activity, the mainstream aid community embraced the need to strengthen state capacity.” Further, building up civil society to both monitor states as well as to provide services that states could no longer afford became a major focus.

By 2000, the United Nations published the eight millennium development goals (MDGs), which were promoted as the overarching goals to be achieved by 2015 that all development organizations and professionals should be working toward. These included: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and global partnership for development ([United Nations, n.d.](#)).

Following the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center, international development became part of the US National Security Plan and development assistance was viewed to a large extent as an important weapon to stave off radicalism and terrorism. An important aspect of this view was the need to democratize countries so that citizens could wield more influence over the decisions that impacted their lives and hence be less motivated to turn to violence.

By 2015, sustainable development had become the operating paradigm. The 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the areas of health, quality education, water and sanitation, gender equality, poverty alleviation, and

energy have been posited as the ideal unifying vision of a future that we all should be working toward.

According to economist Jeffrey Sachs (2015), sustainable development is both an intellectual and a normative pursuit. Intellectually, sustainable development (Sachs, 2015) “tries to make sense of the interactions of three complex systems: the world economy, the global society, and the Earth’s physical environment ... Normatively, [sustainable development] recommends a set of goals to which the world should aspire ... calls for a world in which economic progress is widespread; extreme poverty is eliminated; social trust is encouraged through policies that strengthen the community; the environment is protected from human-induced degradation” (p. 3). To achieve sustainable development, Sachs (2015) adds other objectives of good governance and the provision of social services, infrastructure, promotion of science and technology, and regulations to protect the environment.

How Development Assistance Is Delivered

Leaders in international development deliver assistance in several forms, including cash transfers to developing country governments with conditionalities, through loans, grants, cooperative agreements, programs, and projects. Projects have been the most common form of promoting development and have been the focus of much of the critique of development. Projects are a temporary, time-bound, resource-bound system with specific objectives, which provide funding, training, and technical assistance to change complex systems in developing nations (Thompson, 2015).

Leaders in this volume have been responsible for implementing projects in health, education, agriculture, business, energy, social welfare, technology, humanitarian aid, and other sectors as well as working toward individual and community transformation.

Leading in a Milieu of Intense Criticism

Leaders in international development lead in a milieu that has been the object of extraordinary criticism from many different corners, justified by many different theories and reasons. Leaders have been blamed for poor development designs and results (Cassen, 1986; Easterly, 2006, 2013;

Eyben, 2012, 2014; Foreman, 2012; Moyo & Ferguson, 2010; Riddell, 2007), for forcing inappropriate and unsustainable Western solutions on developing nations (Easterly, 2006, 2013; Thompson, 2015, 2016), for patronizing and neo-imperialist attitudes toward the developing country stakeholders (Biccum, 2005; Easterly, 2006, 2013; Riddell, 2007), for living lavish lifestyles while purportedly helping the poor (Coggins, 2012; Eyben, 2014), and for an array of other reasons.

As expatriate experts, leaders in development often come to developing countries with the stance of the “authority-right-we, as against the alien world of illegitimate-wrong-others” (Perry, 1998, p. 59). Several of the authors in this volume have noted this stance and attributed to it some development failures. Eyben (2014) notes that the majority of leaders in international development who are sincerely interested in making a positive difference in the lives of others have reflected on the possibility that they may have promoted an inequitable system instead of changing it. Faced with the dilemma of having a perception of herself different from how others in developing countries perceive her, a common paradox, Eyben (2014) proposed reflexive thinking as a way of examining one’s own assumptions and issues and possible shadow sides. One of the hopes of this volume is that we will be able to offer leaders in international development a self-reflexive approach to leading that positively impacts the transformation of the global system and sincerely improves the lives of all peoples.

HOW DO THE LEADERS IN THIS VOLUME PRACTICE LEADERSHIP?

The leaders in this volume, as described in Chapter 1, *Toward a Theory of Leading in International Development*, write with heart and generosity about their leadership failures, successes, and the influence of four critical factors surrounding leading in this context, namely gender, culture, context, and sustainability. This following section of the overview offers a summary review of these experiences in order to set the stage for the diversity of stories you are about to read. As illustrated below, our leaders hold a diverse array of views about leading, change, relationship building, power, and the four critical factors surrounding their work.

How Is Leadership Conceived Of?

The authors in this volume have posited a number of different conceptions of leadership in international development that we hope will serve to initiate a dialogue regarding what leadership may be most successful in this profession. **Table 1** includes the various conceptions expressed by the authors in this volume.

The overall focus of the above leadership conceptions is on taking the “other” into consideration for all decisions and actions and leading to facilitate the growth and development of the other, often through a process of discovery and co-creation. Leadership is a cooperative and communal activity built on connection, or what Kathleen Curran calls “Global Resonance” in Chapter 18, *Developing Global Resonance for Global Leadership*. The notion of individual leadership does not make sense. Leadership is always in relationship, and hence, it is critical to transform the “I-you” duality intentionally into a “we” in order for positive and successful change to take place. As we as leaders influence others, they influence us. As we make decisions, the well-being of others is unavoidably part of the equation. We do nothing without input from others and we fool ourselves if we think we do. Further, authors illustrate clearly that leadership is a value-laden activity. The principles and values that the leader holds dear are inevitably manifested in his or her leadership decisions and actions.

How Leaders in International Development Initiate Change?

As change makers, international development leaders introduce change at many different levels and in a number of different ways, including at the policy level of donor organizations and developing country governments; in entire social and industrial systems; in developing country organizations; in communities; and within individuals.

Chapter authors present different approaches to catalyzing change at each of these levels, generally beginning with an emotion-laden mental transformation of certain key individuals that is variously described by the authors as an opening of never imagined opportunities, a new sense of personal power, a mindset change, an opportunity for a new way of doing things that will reap a better life, or an unleashing of personal creativity. As authors describe in their chapters, such a transformation is catalyzed by

Table 1. Conceptions of Leadership Expressed by Authors.

Leadership	Author and Chapter
<p>Leading requires one to be much more focused on others than self, and for me, this is a magnet in drawing people to my side and has given me the opportunity to understand them better, their fears, their joys as well as their aspirations</p>	<p>David Mashzhu-Makota, Chapter 2</p>
<p>I use multidimensional leadership approaches, largely situational but also democratic</p>	
<p>Leadership of international development requires the level of deftness to be able to lead from behind and help steer the communities along the roadmap for the achievement of the SDGs</p>	
<p>Leadership in international development, in my view, basically has to do with hammering on the ideals relevant to the organizational vision and mission as well as aligning with critical legitimate stakeholder interests</p>	<p>Iyabo Obasanjo, Chapter 3</p>
<p>Leadership in this sector also requires flexibility and quick thinking because there is a lot of fluidity in situations, and things change, we need to move very fast forward but without losing sight to our goals</p>	
<p>Entering a room and subtly reading the room is part of leadership and opening yourself up to changing your assumptions quickly as things change. Admitting errors immediately is also important for legitimacy</p>	
<p>Knowing yourself and what you stand for and what you believe in is a critical aspect of leadership</p>	<p>Éliane Ubalijoro, Chapter 4</p>
<p>Leadership is designing safe spaces for others to take risks, to fail toward success, to blunder away from shame toward creativity and innovation</p>	
<p>Leadership is making the vulnerable a powerful bridge for others' authenticity to emerge stronger, bolder, and more caring</p>	
<p>Being able to bring people along (a more feminine leadership trait) while also focusing on task execution, this capacity to hold polarities creates safety for those who are often scapegoated to bring their best ideas and abilities forward while ensuring that voices that are often dominating or charismatic are held under check</p>	

Table 1. (Continued)

Leadership	Author and Chapter
<p>Leadership strategies and tactics differ with context and desired goals that are expected. I believe that the context of leading staff to learn a new process is different from chairing a disciplinary hearing and is equally different from conducting a training program and even from functioning as an arbitrator</p>	Keba T. Modisane, Chapter 5
<p>I argue for a leadership model in which the development community acts as a culturally savvy mediator between the international and local communities rather than a dictator, in order to support and activate local organic leadership. By local organic leadership, I mean leadership that is authentic and originates from incentives developed by community members to make change and not motivated from top–down instructions from outside sources</p>	Anne M. Spear, Chapter 7
<p>We believe in leadership through encouragement, support, networking, and valuing others. We believe that true, sustainable leadership comes from acts of humility and trust; humility in the recognition that we “development professionals” do not have all the answers; and trust in a belief that all women have the capacity to lead if given the appropriate context, tools, skills, and network</p>	Nila Wardani and Kathryn B. Mangino, Chapter 8
<p>Now women can identify the real functions of leadership – influencing others, protecting those who need protection, making hard decisions, and directing others to a better future</p>	
<p>Being a leader is an identity, a persona that one must embody</p>	Ashley N. Lackovich-Van Gorp, Chapter 9
<p>My leadership is an evolving and reiterative practice in which I observe, learn, and interpret the situation and then mold my style, strategy, and tactics accordingly</p>	
<p>I believe that accompaniment and leadership are intrinsically tied together for those who want to serve and work in developing nations</p>	Josh P. Armstrong, Chapter 11
<p>Jesus told his disciples that their leadership needed to be different than what was found in the world</p>	Gordon A. Zook, Chapter 12

Table 1. (Continued)

Leadership	Author and Chapter
The second philosophy is that of servant leadership which views the leader's role as developing other people through serving them. The leader functions from a desire to be a servant, which then leads to leadership as a way of serving others and the larger group or society. The servant leader desires to see others develop their ability to be leaders and draws true satisfaction from seeing this happen	
Intuitive leadership is leading with one's heart while allowing one's mind and gut to process all the information gathered from others through intuition and critical thinking and making decisions always from the perspective of the "we."	Randal Joy Thompson, Chapter 16
Over time I learned that leadership combines positive influence and effective action	Dick Daniels, Chapter 17
Leadership in international development is a journey of humility	
But the transformative moment of leadership is giving without an expectation of getting back	
Clearly, global and international development leadership is not an individual, independent activity. Such leadership is, notably, an interdependent and facilitative one, whether in business, education, or international aid	Kathleen Curran, Chapter 18

trusting relationships accompanied by data to show the benefits of the change; an empowering process where participants achieve mental breakthroughs, new knowledge and skills, or similar happenings. Daniels contends in Chapter 17, *Leadership Musings*, that, in organizational change, cultural change is the initiating factor that proceeds visioning and strategic planning.

Following the initial openness to change, the transformational process is continued through creating buy-in from other key stakeholders, providing the knowledge, skills, resources, and support needed to support the change.

In Chapter 6, *From Marginal to Mainstream: Leadership in Integrating Gender into Private Sector Development*, Amanda Ellis recounts her approach to policy change regarding the need to finance private sector

ventures of women as consisting of three levels that varied significantly based on the social cognitive model of change. She calls her approach at the most senior organizational levels “a transformational deep dive approach to expose unconscious bias.” This approach, she recounts, was essential to help all the executive team become role models and visible advocates of the need for change. They also needed to be convinced of the business case for the change.

For mid-level staff, Ellis concludes that the business case was the most successful approach to obtaining buy-in. Front-line staff bought in through video training that taught them how to comply with the policy in terms of service delivery. Without direct positional power, Ellis recounts that she had to develop a collaborative strategic approach to engage those with power at the top of the organization to own the agenda and then use their directive power to create change through the hierarchy. Measuring results helped drive a positive cycle of change.

Relationship Building

An essential component of change is the building of close relationships with other leaders and stakeholders involved in or impacted by the change. Every author in this volume emphasized the importance of relationship building prior to even initiating any change efforts at any level in developing country systems. The primary focus on relationship building has not been the focus of international development practice, which instead has focused on “getting the job done.” The importance of trustworthy relationships is a universal cultural and human value, and hence, it is baffling how little attention has been spent on this in the international development literature. Chapter 1, *Toward a Theory of Leading in International Development*, provides more evidence of the importance of relationships and connection in leadership in this profession.

IMPACT OF FOUR FACTORS ON LEADERSHIP

As I stated at the beginning of this overview, we requested that authors reflect on the influence of four factors on their leadership, namely gender,

context, culture, and sustainability. Highlights of their reflections are presented in the sections below.

Gender

Most of the authors in this volume interpreted the gender factor to refer to how their own gender affected their leadership access and effectiveness rather than to whether their gender impacted the way they lead. Only Éliane Ubalijoro openly embraces feminine leadership in Chapter 4, *Transforming Community through Feminine Leadership*, and summarizes its key attributes for her. Interestingly, several of the women leaders practice leadership that exemplifies these attributes, without identifying them as feminine. Several of the male leaders in this volume recognize their privilege and also the reality that women bear a disproportionate cost of poverty, conflict, and underdevelopment. Women leaders describe the gender discrimination they have experienced, but also note that their gender gives them access to people and places men cannot go. As such, women leaders can join women's groups where men cannot go and develop an understanding of their needs.

Expatriate women leaders can also enjoy a special status and be excluded from complying with cultural prerogatives required by local women to a certain extent but not completely. As Anne Spear recounts in Chapter 7, *What about the Grassroots Leaders? A Model for Culturally Appropriate Leadership through Empowering Local Women*, they can be considered as a sort-of "Third Gender" with a culture of their own that provides limited access to where local women dare not go.

Culture-adapters and Culture-challengers

Leaders in international development, as the authors in this volume emphasize, must understand and adapt to the cultures within which they lead. Leaders need to be perceptive of cultural values and practices and agile to move from one to another. As Éliane Ubalijoro writes in Chapter 4, *Transforming Community through Feminine Leadership in the African Context*, "The idea that culture eats strategy for breakfast keeps me focused on understanding the contexts in which I am working. Understanding culture is primary to any task where leading with trust is intended. How change

processes are designed, addressed, and implemented need a strong foundation of listening, observing, and seeing patterns that create cultures.” Or, as Iyabo Obasanjo explains in Chapter 3, Leadership in International Development, “I am a product of African traditional Yoruba culture and Western culture and so in Africa I lead differently than I lead in the West. I have to be able to change from one cultural perspective to the other without missing a beat.”

However, these leaders also point out that they are required to be “culture challengers” when certain practices negatively impact life. As David Mashzhu-Makota says in Chapter 2, Chronicles of a Humanitarian Worker, challenging a cultural practice may include

Finding innovative ways of creating new meanings where some cultural practices have become obsolete and are also a violation of some fundamental rights...One has to explore the best ways of engaging the communities without antagonizing them by getting down to their level to understand why they should insist on such practices and then providing them the narrative of the potential harm of such practices...Because they saw me as one of their own, I have been able to lay bare some of the unhealthy and also dangerous cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM). The role played by men in such societies is very crucial and hence they need to be engaged as part of the solution to some problems afflicting the women and communities in general.

In Chapter 3, Leadership in International Development, Iyabo Obasanjo argues that “if a cultural practice kills, it can be changed (or it must be changed). Most cultural rituals have a reason in days of old and now are just rituals with no purpose so they can be changed.” However, to reinforce the elimination of a cultural practice, Obasanjo points out, alternatives must be available. For example, Ashley Lackovich-Van Gorp, author of Chapter 9, Leading with Girls, has spent much of her career working to change the cultural practice of child marriages and does so conscious of the cultural factors that justify such practices. As an African, Obasanjo cautions that options need to be available to change the motivation for such marriages. As she says, “saying that someone shouldn’t give out their 15-year-old in marriage when there is no secondary school in an area and girls are considered

unmarriageable after about age 20 without solving the school and other social issues is what I can interpret to the development worker.”

Context

The context of international development, including the social and economic status of a country or its stability, may influence leadership, and hence, we asked authors to reflect on this factor. Noteworthy to highlight is the influence of conflict situations on leadership and the requirement that leaders not escalate conflicts. Further, as David Mashzhu-Makota points out in Chapter 2, *Chronicles of a Humanitarian Worker*, “security and access play a significant role in development, and as such, insecurity limits access to society, making it impossible for new knowledge and practices to reach these communities. Inaccessible locations are usually associated with underdevelopment.”

Further, in such locations, far from formal systems, all issues are managed through traditional community structures requiring leaders to, as Mashzhu-Makota adds, “find ways of breaking through the social system and begin to develop awareness about basic human rights, children’s rights, women’s rights, and all other matters to help communities develop a much more egalitarian social order.”

Sustainability

Authors interpreted sustainability differently, and it became clear from the authors that the United Nations has not clarified how the SDGs are to be interpreted or obtained consensus among leaders regarding how they are to be achieved. The SDGs have impacted the leaders in various ways including being more conscious about the impact of their work on the state of the world and the environment. As Éliane Ubalijoro comments in Chapter 4, *Transforming Community through Feminine Leadership in the African Context*, “What the SDGs reinforce for me is that respect for environment/emotional space/built space/design are critical to humanity’s thriving in ways that do not hurt the planet. The SDGs have made things that were seen as ‘soft stuff’ take on more importance today and give my leadership greater credibility. I am not seen as a soft feminine leader but as a leader who believes in the interconnectedness of all.”

Marie Beebe emphasizes that “sustainable development presumes balancing economic, social, and environmental considerations.” Iyabo Obasanjo and Ashley Lackovich-Van Gorp stress the essential role of women in the achievement of the SDGs and highlight especially SDG 5. Lackovich-Van Gorp reflects on the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls. Obasanjo and Nicole Rouvinez-Bouli emphasize that the most important SDGs focus on health. Dick Daniels argues that “the 17 SDGs and 169 targets within those goals demonstrate the need for collaborative partnership. This leadership competency requires the interpersonal savvy and cultural sensitivity to work across typical borders and boundaries to serve a greater purpose together.”

Power

Power was not a factor that we requested authors to address but it emerged, not surprisingly, as a significant factor that influences leadership at all levels and in all sectors of international development. Power is an essential factor in the theory that Julia Storberg-Walker presents in Chapter 1, *Toward a Theory of Leading in International Development*. Expatriates representing Western nations or even INGOs enter developing countries and cross-country borders representing various power positions. And they, too, encounter individuals in developing countries also representing specific power positions.

Several authors discuss the need for leaders to more self-consciously reflect on their own power and privilege and to assess the power structures and make a determination whether to work within the given power structures or to become “power challengers” in order to achieve a more equitable society. International development leaders may face political grandstanding by local leaders whose power base is threatened and their organizations may even be asked to leave the country. Anne Spear contends in Chapter 7, *What about the Grassroots Leaders? A Model for Culturally Appropriate Leadership through Empowering Local Women*, that some of the failures she has noted result because “development leaders fail to become skilled at ‘playing’ with and around power, and development organizations themselves are unwilling to concede power and influence, refusing to challenge harmful power dynamics, particularly regarding gender inequalities.”

She offers an analysis of wider power relations that influence leaders in Part 2, *Power in International Development Leadership*, of this overview.

NOTE

1. Gustavo Esteva is a Mexican activist who founded the University of the Earth in Oaxaca, Mexico, a network of learning, study, reflection, and action. He is a well-known advocate of post-development.