

Note for WSF Webinar on ‘Strong Local Governance Institutions for Effective Skill Development’

The global conversation on sustainability has now begun to focus more explicitly on skill development as a gateway to sustainable livelihoods for the population entering the workforce – India alone has nearly a billion people in the working age cohort who need to be productive and profitably employed. If the youth dividend is to be harnessed, high-quality human capital with the right mix of skill, attitude and orientation is required, else many countries with a young population today will not reap benefits. “They might get old before they get rich.”

While there is a large body of work and corpus of practices on vocational training and technical education, it might be useful to begin a dialogue on new avenues of skill development – FinTech, GovTech, Digital Economy, etc. - and the role that local governance institutions can play – and how to leverage climate finance for these.

Skill development in FinTech is a case in point. To achieve maximum impact, the climate-investment instruments must be made available to the average investor on liquid, low-cost terms. While ETFs can help, not everyone has a brokerage account, or even a bank account. We tend to overlook the unbanked populations of the Global South, as well as the younger generations, for whom digital assets may be more appealing. According to the World Bank 1.4 billion adults are unbanked globally, and the share of the unbanked population exceeds 50% in several Middle Eastern, Asian, and African countries with larger youth (“digital native”) populations.

To build climate-resilient communities, encourage cross-border public-private partnerships, secure critical green supplies, and accommodate climate-driven population shifts around the world, policymakers and asset owners urgently need to rethink how we channel capital towards skill development at scale. With climate-driven costs escalating rapidly, innovation (both technological and financial) remains the most powerful tool at our disposal. Innovation of course requires local action and this is where local governance institutions can play a catalytic role.

Accordingly, it is proposed to have a virtual dialogue under the aegis of the WSF on new and innovative areas for skill development and the role that local governance institutions – both urban and rural – can play. There is now a significant body of work on local governance and SDGs – including SDG plans for rural councils and urban local bodies. It is time now to bring the body of work on local planning for SDGs to bear on innovative and effective pathways for skill development and higher quality of human capital.

At this webinar, we expect to bring together experts working on sustainability and digital and grassroots practitioners working on skill development, including in sunrise sectors such as financial services, logistics sector (India’s Gati Shakti for example) and infrastructure workers, etc.