

Preface

Since the dawn of the industrial age, innovative technologies have been viewed as instrumental in enhancing productivity, generating economic growth, and transforming living conditions for billions of people. These technologies are a priority for North–South development cooperation, empowerment, and poverty reduction.

At the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), we believe that technological innovation can be a pathway to sustainable development. Indeed, innovative and well-adapted technologies are very powerful tools that can render development effective on a large scale for disadvantaged people.

EPFL has been active in development cooperation for decades. This embodies the institution's open approach to the world: An outlook where humanist values and a scientific spirit are combined to produce research that is guided by a sense of responsibility toward the major problems faced by people in the Global South. It reflects the long-established ties between Switzerland and other countries, which are expressed in various, complementary ways: admission of students from the South, partnerships with universities and research centers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and numerous internationally recognized scientific and technical products. Development cooperation also complements Swiss government policies and relevant national legislation.

In 2007, UNESCO bestowed the Chair in Technologies for Development on the Cooperation & Development Center (CODEV), thus increasing the coherence and visibility of EPFL's development cooperation activities and reinforcing its existing research, education, and capacity building activities.

Through the UNESCO Chair, EPFL seeks to further utilize its know-how and international renown to establish partnerships with developing and emerging countries as: It is at the cutting edge in many scientific domains and can therefore function as a relay to developing countries; its acknowledged expertise brings it into contact with many projects funded by development cooperation organizations; and it has close links with national and international scientific networks and can thus express its viewpoint on various development issues.

The strength of the UNESCO Chair lies in its dual capacity to orient EPFL laboratories toward specific development objectives and to conduct research and

educational programs focused on international development. The biennial UNESCO Conferences on Technologies for Development, in particular, are rapidly turning into flagship events for CODEV, drawing an ever-increasing audience.

These conferences are highly successful in promoting research in technologies and innovation for developing countries. They create a platform for spirited discussion and scientific exchange, as well as increased awareness of state-of-the-art technologies and their potential in the Global South. North–South research partnerships are promoted, and diverse stakeholders and actors are encouraged to engage in cooperation projects by these events.

This volume brings together the best papers of the 2014 EPFL-UNESCO Conference on Technologies for Development (2014 Tech4Dev) and illustrates the key issues at the interface of technology, human, social, and economic growth. Case studies from Africa, Asia, and Latin America explore the development potential of technologies and discuss successful processes to develop and deploy them, as well as how to evaluate their impact.

EPFL envisions the future as a globalized society, where our responsibilities, as scientists and more broadly as academic institutions, are producing knowledge, innovative technologies, and high-level graduates that are aware, can adapt to global challenges, and are equipped to collaborate with our colleagues from the four corners of the world, especially where serious problems of survival, development, and progress remain to be solved.

Jean-Claude Bolay

Technologies for Development

What is Essential?

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