

Transformation from the ground up: Acting at the local level

Wednesday, 10 July 2024, 4:45 - 6:00 PM, Conference Room 4

Delivered by Cielito Perez, Center for Women's Resources/APRCEM (MGOS)

Indeed, acting at the local level is a catalyst to the full implementation of the SDGs, and people's democratic participation at the local level is crucial to realize development justice.

Marginalized groups, particularly in the Global South, suffer the most from crises resulting from the decades of the profit-oriented neoliberal system. The 2030 Agenda promised to leave no one behind, and yet, while most of us are still reeling from the impacts of the pandemic, recent years have brought even deeper crises.

Effective people's participation at the local level is crucial. And while progress has been made with the institutionalization of people's councils and local development bodies, full engagement remains elusive. If given priority, people's participation will enable us to plan, implement, monitor, and assess local policies to identify gaps and ensure that resources are allocated equitably.

Marginalized communities also offer grassroots actions and solutions such as agroecology, sustainable food systems, community-based-climate solutions, people-led renewable energy systems, and community education, among others. These are the initiatives that local governments need to support, rather than prioritizing corporate interests.

However, despite overwhelming evidence of positive outcomes, marginalized groups face reluctance, exclusion, and sometimes, even alarming reprisals when engaging in development processes. Many of these are indigenous peoples, farmers, workers, women, who are working towards sustainable development and human rights. This contradicts building a peaceful, just, and inclusive society set by the 2030 Agenda.

Finally, I would reiterate that meaningful people's participation at the local level is not just an option, but a necessity to ensure that development is driven-by and responsive to the needs and aspirations of those who have been systematically left

behind. We need the national and local governments to enable a bottom-up approach, for a more inclusive, and just sustainable development. #