

*Patrick Fine:* Hello, and welcome. I'm Patrick Fine, CEO of FHI 360, and you're listening to A Deeper Look podcast. Today, I have the pleasure and the privilege of speaking with Tony Pipa, a leading voice on the sustainable development goals. Tony, thank you for joining me.

*Tony Pipa:* Thank you, Patrick. It's great to be here.

*Patrick Fine:* This is the last episode of 2017, and as our returning listeners know, this year, we've been discussing the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs. We couldn't have a better way to conclude this year's series than talking with Tony Pipa, who played a central role in the development of the SDGs as the U.S. government's sherpa in the negotiations at the UN.

If you are new to the podcast, welcome. I invite you to catch up on previous episodes on SoundCloud or iTunes.

Today, we're going to be talking about the creation and vision of the goals and hear how we're doing on meeting the goals.

Tony is a senior fellow in the Global Economy and Development Program at the Brookings Institution, where he studies efforts to achieve the SDGs and is especially interested in making the universality of the SDGs meaningful. He's served as Chief Strategy Officer for USAID and was the U.S. Special Coordinator for the post-2015 agenda at the Department of State, where he led the U.S. delegation at the UN to negotiate and adopt the SDGs. Tony brings more than 25 years of experience in both the philanthropic and public sectors, addressing poverty in the U.S. and globally, so we really are pleased to have somebody with Tony's breadth of experience to help us wrap up this year's podcast series.

Tony, the SDGs have been the theme of the series, but for you, it's been a theme of your career in at least the last, what, five years?

*Tony Pipa:* Indeed, Patrick. *[Laughter]*

*Patrick Fine:* So, I'd like to dive right in. Tony, can you give us a behind-the-scenes look at the formation of the SDGs?

*Tony Pipa:* So, the SDGs were created through a series of linked processes that the Secretary General said to be the most inclusive, transparent process in the United Nations' history. Over three years, it included the entire General Assembly, so all 193 member states, as well as

civil society and businesses, which actually had formal, official seats at the table, not to agree to the goals, but to actually [have] input into the goals. And we had a lot of experts and expertise as we were developing the goals and putting them together.

*Patrick Fine:* What would you see as the strong points of that, and what would you see as the weaknesses?

*Tony Pipa:* Well, I think the strong points are that, I think we've seen in the early days of the SDGs, more uptake at the country level, because countries themselves were involved in developing them and putting them together. I think you've also seen more uptake amongst experts and other stakeholders, because they actually were involved in the process as well, so civil society, even businesses, potential investors. On the other side, you know, it resulted in a framework that is inconsistent at certain points within the framework if you look more deeply at it.

*Patrick Fine:* Can you just give an example?

*Tony Pipa:* So, you have some real precision on goals within the framework –

*Patrick Fine:* Uh-huh.

*Tony Pipa:* – like on the targets around maternal mortality or child mortality, but then you have targets that are frankly more rhetorical than measurable.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* So that's...

*Patrick Fine:* But that just reflects what you see in different sectors. It's easier to get measurements, precise metrics for health interventions than, say, for civil society strengthening interventions, or if the goal is [to] end poverty, which is a big aspirational goal –

*Tony Pipa:* Right.

*Patrick Fine:* – getting precise metrics for that is just going to be a challenge.

*Tony Pipa:* Yeah, that's, that's part of it, but there's also compromises within it, if you look closely, that I think have more to do with where certain countries' interests were at than necessarily the most technical –

*Patrick Fine:* The methodology.

*Tony Pipa:* – the methodology and the most technical approach that you might take as a development practitioner, for example. So, it reflects a little bit of the politics of 193 countries trying to work this out, vs. just experts and where the intellectual landscape was at the particular moment about what we know about development.

*Patrick Fine:* So, you identified the engagement, and the ownership by countries and engagement by members of the development community, by experts and practitioners, as one of the great strengths. And I see that too, but I see it as being somewhat inconsistent. So, in developing countries or in lower-income countries, I see a lot of ownership. I see a lot of reference to the SDGs. People know what they are.

*Tony Pipa:* Right.

*Patrick Fine:* And they talk about how they're influencing their practice. In the U.S., I don't see that nearly as much. And in not only the U.S.; in some of the donor nations, while there's recognition of the SDGs, I see less ownership or enthusiasm. Is that something that you see?

*Tony Pipa:* So, I think OECD countries and traditional donor countries are struggling with their dual responsibility with the SDGs, if you will, because the SDGs are universal. Countries signed up to achieve them within their own boundaries, and every country in the world did that, it's not just developing countries. But then also, developed countries were making a commitment to investing in achieving the SDGs globally as well, and so investing either in developing countries or in global public goods that would need to be in place for them to achieve the SDGs. And given the SDGs are a successor to the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals], developing countries have a greater fluency in them, so to speak. They are more used to using a framework by which to develop their plans and make progress, and there frankly was even, I think, greater general awareness of the MDGs in developing countries than there were in developed countries –

*Patrick Fine:* Yeah.

*Tony Pipa:* – so I mean at the general public level, right?

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* I think for developed countries, that part of their government or even other stakeholders that are investing in emerging economies or in the developing world, there's actually still a great awareness of the SDGs. And so those who are even in the general public and are interested in what progress looks like globally and in developing countries, I think you have a fair familiarity with the SDGs and, you know, large NGOs, those that are –

*Patrick Fine:* And corporates too.

*Tony Pipa:* And corporate – exactly, multinational corporations.

They have really embraced the SDGs, and they see it as a framework that reflects what can be happening in a country, but on the domestic side, there's been much less uptake –

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* – and much less general awareness. So, even in the multilateral – or in the multinational corporations. So, for example, you can take a U.S. corporation; they are sometimes doing work within the U.S. that would count as a SDG contribution, because they made commitments along those lines.

*Patrick Fine:* Right, right.

*Tony Pipa:* But they don't talk about it in terms of the SDGs –

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* – whereas they'll talk about the SDGs in terms of their emerging opportunities or opportunity that they might be having in developing countries, so even they're not connecting the dots necessarily internally.

And I think we're struggling with what does it really mean to apply the SDGs universally in many different ways, both at the organizational level and even at the philosophical and the level of approach.

*Patrick Fine:* Right. I would expect that there will be some sensitivity from the U.S. government and state governments, from U.S. authorities who would tend to see the Sustainable Development Goals as something that apply to other countries but not to the U.S. Do you want to say a little bit about that concept of universality? Because

that's one aspect of the Sustainable Development Goals that really sets it apart from the Millennium Development Goals, the, as you said, the predecessor goals. The SDGs have that principle that they apply not just to low-income or developing countries, but to all countries, because all countries face human development challenges.

*Tony Pipa:* Yeah, so I think it's one of the most revolutionary aspects, actually, of the Sustainable Development Goals. It anticipates, actually, what happened with the commitment on climate change in Paris, which was also all countries making commitments. Flipped the other way around a little bit, because it was developing countries who were saying, "Why do we have to commit to some of these commitments and responsibilities with climate change, because we're still developing? You as developed countries were able to do certain things that now you're asking us not to do that could accelerate our own development."

They're two different sides of the same coin, but they really try to break down the, the dichotomy between developed and developing. Now, on the one side, developed countries still made a commitment to continue to invest in and assist and partner with developing countries to help them achieve the goals. And as you said, they came out of the Millennium Development Goals – the Millennium Development Goals were really a blueprint for aid, so it really was money coming from developed countries going into developing countries.

*Patrick Fine:* I think that's an important distinction to make.

*Tony Pipa:* Yeah, and this is really a blueprint or a framework for, as you say, any country to be able to develop.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* It's what a government and a set of stakeholders really can owe to the citizens within that particular country, no matter their level of development. And we all have work to do.

And if you look at one of the targets under poverty, which is a 50 percent reduction in national-level poverty, certainly, with the political moment in the U.S., extremely relevant. We're seeing many people being left behind, especially in different geographic areas, where the distress of communities has rates of greater than 40 percent of working-age adults actually not working in jobs.

*Patrick Fine:* So, you know, one of the reasons that I think there is uptake or embracing of the SDGs in developing countries is because they see it as useful in terms of articulating the challenges and then mobilizing support for those challenges. We don't see that in poor communities in the U.S.

But I wonder if there's some kind of communication campaign that could reach local governments, state, county governments, "Here is a tool and a framework that would be useful to you in addressing the human development challenges that you're dealing with in your county." Has that ever occurred to you?

*Tony Pipa:* Yes, yes, and there's a lot of different stakeholders doing work along these lines. For example, the Council on Foundations, which is the body in the U.S. that is the association of all of the U.S.-based philanthropic foundations, has been going to cities across the United States to say exactly this: "Here is a framework that's globally agreed, that the U.S. signed up to, that actually has great relevance for your local work in your communities," and they're talking to community foundations, and they're talking to foundations that are geographically restricted, actually making progress inside the United States.

So, it's not just foundations that are, that are just making global contributions.

*Patrick Fine:* – working overseas, yeah. You're right. The role of philanthropy in achieving the SDGs is really important, and in fact, we just had a conversation on the last episode of A Deeper Look podcast with Vicki Spruill, the Executive Director of the Council on Foundations.

*Tony Pipa:* Yeah, and they've done gatherings, for example, in places like Little Rock and Jacksonville, Florida, and Minneapolis, so places that are not just the coastal cities where you have sort of globally minded foundations as well. You have multiple cities – you have Baltimore, San Jose, New York, that have come up with plans that then they've aligned against the SDGs, to be able to have their data and what their progress looks like actually sync up to what the framework provides. In the United States, one of the sensitive issues is that this is a framework agreed to under the UN umbrella, like under the auspices of the UN.

And there's always this balance within the United States of sovereignty vs., you know, the United Nations being something that's directing our national policy. But, I think you're finding, there are a few different elements of the SDGs which are becoming very attractive to sub-national actors, if you will, so, city leaders, mayors, state governments and also businesses and civil society. One is that it is goal setting, right?

So interestingly, when we make a lot of our investments overseas, we ask other governments to set both ambitious but precise goals as to what they're trying to achieve. We ask them to look at data and to look at ways in which they're going to accelerate their progress by where that data trend line looks to go.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* We don't necessarily do things that way in the United States. We don't set hard-and-fast goals, especially from a political perspective, where we have political leaders stand up and say, "We are going to reduce the addiction of opioids and accidental deaths from opioids and drug overdoses by this particular percentage or to this absolute value within this amount of time," and these are, as you say, the mobilizing action that occurs.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* "These are the partners that are going to help us do it. This is the part that pharmaceutical companies are going to play. This is the part that health care providers are going to play. This is the part that businesses and local leadership will play, and we're all making our contributions in this particular way." And I think mayors and governors and others are seeing the SDGs as a way to say, "This works. This has worked overseas. This is a way we could apply this here."

*Patrick Fine:* Well, and, and that would be contextualizing it as well.

*Tony Pipa:* Exactly.

*Patrick Fine:* So, it sounds like you do see some traction, not – I mean, now we're talking about traction here in the U.S. –

*Tony Pipa:* In the United States.

*Patrick Fine:* – which I think is an interesting place to look. We certainly have seen traction in other countries, in African countries, in Asian countries. You're seeing traction here, and you're in a good position, because you were the person who negotiated the sustainable development goals on behalf of the U.S. government.

*Tony Pipa:* Yes.

*Patrick Fine:* So, you were present at the creation.

*Tony Pipa:* I was indeed.

*Patrick Fine:* So, I'm curious. Now we're two years into a 15-year cycle. When you think about the progress we've made in the last two years, do you have a sense of satisfaction and optimism that, yes, there is traction, it's moving in the right direction, and there's a good pace?

Or do you have a sense of disappointment that it's not fulfilling the expectations that you had when we all gathered together, when the nations of the world gathered together in 2015 to sign these?

*Tony Pipa:* Both. *[Laughter.]* So, on the positive side, I do think the SDGs, especially in the global community; less so in developed countries, but especially in the global community and the community of people who are working for global development, I think the SDGs have become sort of the DNA of global development.

*Patrick Fine:* Mm-hmm.

*Tony Pipa:* Two, I think you're seeing diffusion of the SDGs that goes beyond just governments, so you are seeing an embrace by businesses. You are seeing an embrace by universities, by civil society leaders, by philanthropists, and I think that's really positive. And you're seeing not just an embrace, but businesses, for example, consciously trying to integrate the SDGs and think intentionally about where it intersects with their business models.

And then thirdly, I think you have seen, you know, the SDGs call for a data revolution, and I think you've at least seen some revolutionaries come out. I'm not sure we're in full-blown revolution yet, but you've seen a lot of focus on data and the importance of data and the importance of measuring progress.

*Patrick Fine:* Don't you think that a big part of that is just what's happening with technology?



*Tony Pipa:* Part of that is, yes, but part of it is also making the investments to also then apply it to development –

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* – both in terms of accelerating development and measuring our progress, and I've seen a much more rich and intentional conversation around that.

*Patrick Fine:* I want to go back to the point about sovereignty that you made –

*Tony Pipa:* Right.

*Patrick Fine:* – and then ask you about accountability, because that seems to be one of the sticking points.

Just in terms of sovereignty, so you were there leading the negotiations on behalf of the U.S. government. Did that point of sovereignty come up as an important negotiating factor?

*Tony Pipa:* Yes.

*Patrick Fine:* Can you say a little bit about that?

*Tony Pipa:* Yeah, so the process of the SDGs was a General Assembly process. Every nation came to this, but also with their own national interests at stake. We in the U.S., were very clear within all parts of government – domestic as well as international agencies – that we would be signing up to something that also applied to the United States. What we looked at though was that, from our point of view, we were not going to be adopting an agenda that was forced on us by a global commitment, but actually that there was a great deal of alignment between what we saw as our own national priorities and what was reflected in the SDGs.

In fact, we saw the process of negotiations as a real opportunity to bring the full force of evidence and progress that we've seen, both through our international investments and even domestically, to bear on this particular process. And we fought really hard for evidence and experts to be part of those conversations to make sure that they reflected that, and good development practice and development as a discipline vs. sort of the opinions of lots of different countries and trying to make something out of this mismatch.

*Patrick Fine:* So, trying to get it to be more objective?

*Tony Pipa:* Yes, trying to be grounded in the realities of what we've experienced and, and what that looked like.

Now, it wasn't always perfect, but we also had a set of priorities. For example, the, the priority around getting things like strength of governance, rule of law, peace and security, what's captured in goal 16 was a priority for us, because we felt as if, from our own experience as a country and from our experiences in investing in other countries, those were really key factors in accelerating development and sustaining that development going forward.

*Patrick Fine:* Policy matters.

*Tony Pipa:* Exactly, and so sovereignty was there, and we also realized that there would be sensitivity on the messaging around the SDGs and how they applied to the U.S. because of that. But when we looked at our domestic agenda, we felt as though much of what we were doing domestically, and even what this current administration is worried about domestically, finds a lot of reflection in the SDGs.

Issues around job creation, around infrastructure, around health, around poverty, those are reflected in the SDGs, and I don't think that there are things in there that feel as if they're telling the U.S. to do something different or prioritizing something that is different than what we might pursue.

*Patrick Fine:* One of the main criticisms that I hear now is that there aren't really built into the SDGs clear accountability mechanisms. And my understanding is that the targets were intended to set some metrics that we could then hold ourselves accountable to achieving.

The criticism I hear is that even where there are targets, there aren't mechanisms for monitoring our progress toward achieving those targets.

*Tony Pipa:* Well, there's an official mechanism – a couple of official mechanisms through the UN. There will be a yearly – an annual meeting called the High-Level Political Forum that is to check in on what progress looks like, and every four years, that's meant to be at the head-of-state level. And countries make reports on what their progress has been on the SDGs. And there is an official

measurement system through the UN with a set of 230-plus indicators that will measure what global progress looks like.

Now, so there's an official monitoring architecture, if you will, put in place. Now, I would say that even those involved in it would say that it's imperfect. It doesn't comprehensively measure everything that's in the targets and the goals in a way that will give you a real sense of, you know, if there's portions or elements within a particular target where you're making good progress, and other elements within a target that you're not. I do feel as though there's been investments, both in data and in third-party efforts, to also shine a light on where there is progress, but then, frankly, where there are gaps or where there hasn't been as much progress as people really signed up for.

There needs to be more of that, and I think you're going to have to have a really robust and rich ecosystem of that for there to be a really clear picture of how well we're doing on the SDGs.

*Patrick Fine:* As we get further into the SDG period, say five years from now – that's about the halfway point, whether governments want it or not, there will be a large amount of information available.

*Tony Pipa:* I agree, and I think the trick is to make sure that others have the capacity to use that information in a way that really shines the light on progress.

*Patrick Fine:* One of the perceptions that I have is that in the run-up to adopting the SDGs, there was a real sense of urgency and of purpose and of drive by people like you and other governments to reach agreements that were inclusive, reflected the positions of many different countries, of all the countries, and that were adopted, then actually got ratified. Since then, there was almost a sense of exhaustion, like, "We got the ball over the finish line." That sense of urgency is not as present as it was in achieving the objective of just having the SDGs. Do you think that's a fair perception?

*Tony Pipa:* Yeah. So, when I said both, I mean, we talked a little bit about the positive side, but I think there's a negative side here. So, I agree. One, the politics have changed dramatically, and the populist fervor that you're feeling throughout much of the developed world I think also calls into question the global cooperation that agreements like the SDGs and Paris were results of.

I think it's really interesting because on one hand, that populous fervor asks nations to start from the sense and be very strong about their own national interests, but what's being conflated is that national interest is being conflated with like a zero-sum thinking.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* So, your national interest is always taking away from or at the expense of some other nation's interest, which is actually, I think, something that we'll see, it doesn't reflect reality. But what it has done is made it very difficult for that sense of global cooperation to continue to just drive momentum forward.

I think one of the key things that we need for successful achievement of the SDGs is successful multilateral cooperation, and I think that means not just abandoning institutions like the United Nations or the World Bank or the Bretton Woods institutions, or even, you know, a forum like the G20 and the G7, but actually investing in them and making them fit for purpose.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* So, you've seen reform agendas start to come forward, and I think those are important, but I think it's going to need leadership, because reform of those particular systems is going to require some real investment and some real political will, and you need support to be able to do that from the member countries. And so, one thing that I think is a big potential drawback or that can potentially undermine achievement of the SDGs is where we are with multilateral cooperation.

Secondly, I think that we're missing the sense of urgency on a key theme of the SDGs that we heard over and over and over when we were negotiating them and in the run up, but I think we've taken too deep a breath, or maybe we thought things would just go along the way they were, and that's on Leave No One Behind.

You know, the amount of progress we had made on extreme poverty, for example, through the MDGs and prior to the SDGs, made us very optimistic about what that could look like over the next 15-year period.

*Patrick Fine:* Right. It's still on a very strong trajectory.

*Tony Pipa:* And it's still on a very strong trajectory, but it's slowing down. And you had extreme poverty, for example, increase in 12 countries over the last year by more than 1 percent. You've had global hunger start to increase. And I think we're seeing some warning signals around that, that I think are troubling.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* And I think it speaks to something else that we talked a bit about when we were developing the SDGs, but it's a significant challenge, and one that we're really going to have to be intentional and really committed to, and that is how to accelerate development in areas of conflict or where governance is not as strong, those countries that we call fragile states or areas of fragility. You know, we're having more conversations around whether we ought to be invested in countries like that, vs. we committed to investing in that, and then how do we do the best we can.

*Patrick Fine:* At the time that you were working on formulating the goals, how did you envision those goals being undertaken in conflict situations? Was there much discussion about that, their applicability in fragile states?

*Tony Pipa:* So, we wanted them applied everywhere. I think even the – what's captured in goal 16 we hoped would be a platform for which to continue momentum toward ending conflict and ending violence where it was occurring. It was yet another reason and another commitment that countries had signed up to that we could hold countries accountable to, or at least change the nature of that conversation at the country level and at the political level in those particular places, especially for countries coming out of conflict. I think they really saw it as a way for them to say, "Look, for us to be able to achieve development in all its many different dimensions, here are some key building blocks that we need put in place, and we need your focus on these key building blocks."

*Patrick Fine:* You know, it's easy to see how a country that's moving from conflict to relief to development can use the SDGs as a framework. They speak directly to the challenges that a country in that situation faces. It's the countries that are mired in poor governance, poor rule of law, and then conflict where I guess that comes back to that notion of collective action.

*Tony Pipa:* Yeah, exactly.

*Patrick Fine:* We're in a period right now where collective action is being weakened, weakened by the withdrawal of the U.S. So, the U.S. is – the current administration is not enthusiastic about taking approaches that are in unison with the concert of nations, and you can see the impact, even less than a year into the administration, you can see the impact if one major player, like the U.S., holds back. We haven't – it's not that we, that we've expressed any kind of antagonism toward the SDGs or toward collective action, but there's a reticence that I feel. You can see the impact of that reticence on the ability of the international community to take collective action on issues that affect us all.

*Tony Pipa:* Well, that's, I think, a big part of the lack of sense of urgency that you've talked about. And you know, 2015 was a big year, and there was a big push to get multiple processes over the line, not just the SDGs, but the Paris process and climate itself, as well, the financing for development process, in Addis [Ababa]. But I do think the change in willingness to act collectively and to see global cooperation and sort of multilateral cooperation as important in taking on some of these really tough, challenging areas has at least undermined a little bit of the momentum that we might have come out of 2015 with.

Having said that, you know, this is a 15-year agenda. Even in the beginning of the Millennium Development Goals, the U.S. didn't embrace them strongly and was not a strong actor or player in them and I think –

*Patrick Fine:* Just on that point, I went back and looked at the progress toward the MDGs, the Millennium Development Goals, and for the first couple of years, there was very little really said about them, and it really wasn't until about year five, six and seven that you started to get real momentum. And then people saw that they were producing results, and then that created a bandwagon effect, so that for the second half of that period, you now had countries that were seriously committed to trying to show that they were achieving those goals, so it could be analogous.

*Tony Pipa:* Yes, I'm hoping that we're – we can use some of that playbook for the SDGs as well, and the SDGs are so much more ambitious and broader than the MDGs, that it's, I think, natural for there to be a period of digestion in some respect, as well.

*Patrick Fine:* And part of that is, especially in the case of the U.S., is seeing the relevance to our own challenges, to local challenges. Like, you pointed out the opioid epidemic.

*Tony Pipa:* Yeah.

*Patrick Fine:* That's a real human – a pressing human development challenge in this country, and if policymakers at the municipal level or the country or state level see that their interests align with the goals that have been set out as a global agenda, then the issue of sovereignty doesn't –

*Tony Pipa:* Exactly.

*Patrick Fine:* – is not violated.

*Tony Pipa:* Right.

*Patrick Fine:* In fact, there's alignment, and people can see that, "Wow, we can use this to put wind in the sails of our own efforts."

*Tony Pipa:* Yeah. In fact, I'm starting to become – I was up in New York having a conversation amongst a bunch of us on the SDGs and talking about the difficulty in getting universality to be meaningful up to now. And one of the comments was that it may be more cities and states that make universality more meaningful than it is federal governments.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* If I'm the mayor of New York City and Sao Paulo, we have a lot in common.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* And so, sharing models back and forth is a very natural thing for us to do, and businesses actually, as well. It may be those sub-national actors, you know, mayors and, and governors, and it may be businesses and other stakeholders, universities, that really are the ones that, that make universality meaningful, because they can sort of break down the siloes that even geographic boundaries put us in.

*Patrick Fine:* Right, they relate to it.

*Tony Pipa:* Exactly.

- Patrick Fine:* And they can see how it, how it contributes to their achieving things they care about –
- Tony Pipa:* Right.
- Patrick Fine:* – which in terms of the ownership, it is striking to me that if you look at who are the actors that have embraced and are talking about the SDGs and are taking actions to advance the SDGs – large corporations are one of the groups that really see value in it, and I believe it's because they see that this can help them achieve things they care about.
- Tony Pipa:* Yeah, I agree, and I think they also see where their commercial interests – so this is not just corporate social responsibility for them.
- Patrick Fine:* Right.
- Tony Pipa:* But they're looking at where their commercial interests overlap with the development possibilities and where the opportunities really are as well.
- Patrick Fine:* Right, and geopolitical realities as well.
- Tony Pipa:* Exactly, and geopolitical realities. I think the investment community is also coming along on this. I mean, you saw the Global Impact Investing Network's report where they're using the SDGs as the framework for thinking about how to think about impact –
- Patrick Fine:* That's right.
- Tony Pipa:* So, my presumption is at SOCAP, there was probably lots of talk around the SDGs.
- Patrick Fine:* I was at SOCAP this year, and the SDGs were referenced, but they weren't front and center.
- Tony Pipa:* Yeah.
- Patrick Fine:* So, that would be an example where, at least in the U.S. development community, and that's the investor community, they're aware of it. There's some reference to it, but it's still not as central as when you go to a gathering internationally, and you're



talking with other governments and civil society from developing countries, where they really are invested in the SDGs.

*Tony Pipa:* Yeah, yes, I agree, and, I'll be at a gathering soon in Colorado amongst a group of social entrepreneurs. My role there is to talk about the SDGs because they're doing an enormous amount of innovation, and they're investing in that innovation in the United States. And they don't realize, actually, the extent to which others that are working more globally, that their work sort of aligns against the SDGs and against this global agreement.

*Patrick Fine:* Right. I think one prospect is that the amount of money that flows – not just to social investments or social impact investments, but just to enterprises and to the development of small business and to the opportunities in growth markets, where they do care about the SDGs, they do benchmark themselves against them, that the interest and the use of the SDGs will follow the money.

*Tony Pipa:* Yeah.

*Patrick Fine:* And if you look into the future, say, again, five or seven years down the road, and you think of a growing trend in private investment driving growth in countries around the world, that then are using the SDGs as one way to measure their progress, that that itself will create momentum and traction?

*Tony Pipa:* I hope so, and I think that's one of the things we can be doing now in the U.S. and in other developed countries to till the soil, so to speak, and set that up. I would say that one of the things I'm – I've been really pleased to see the recognition by business and investors and others that it will require significant investment to be able to achieve the SDGs.

*Patrick Fine:* Right. There's that three –

*Tony Pipa:* – billions to trillions.

*Patrick Fine:* I mean, but that scares – I think that, that puts people off or something.

*Tony Pipa:* Yeah, some, some people, I think it puts off. Others, I think it's galvanized, and they see it as an opportunity. My worry is that it's been a little more rhetoric than reality right now. There's been a lot of experimentation, I think, with different models that can make things happen, but are we really unleashing the amount of

resources that we would need to achieve the SDGs? That, I don't think we're there yet, and I think, and I think we're going to have to get there fairly quickly, because otherwise, we're going to be too many years into the 15 years, and we'll have to play too much catch up.

*Patrick Fine:* There's always been resource shortages, so we're always limited by resources. But, looking forward, I believe that it's going to be private capital that really drives the achievement through economic growth, and that we've reached the point in most countries where there's enough stability, there's enough infrastructure, and there's enough human capital that enterprise really can be the engine of growth. So, we've talked about that since the 1960s, but during many of those decades, the prerequisites for enterprise to really drive growth were limited. Now, we see growth economies that can put capital to work because the infrastructure is there, and I think that's what we'll see in terms of the financing. That's going to be the lynchpin piece of it. And that's where, again, collective interests come to bear, because certainly, the U.S. has a huge interest in seeing its business community participate in taking advantage of opportunities or, or seizing opportunities that the global economy is going to create.

*Tony Pipa:* So, I agree with your point on private capital, and even after we did the negotiations, I called it an all-hands-on-deck approach, right? It's a whole-society approach. This goes far beyond governments. This is not the resources of governments that are going to help us achieve this. It is really going to be private capital as the engine to drive the kind of growth that you're talking about. My one, friendly amendment to that is it has to be inclusive growth.

*Patrick Fine:* Right.

*Tony Pipa:* And that is where development actors come into play, to help –

*Patrick Fine:* It's the Leave No One Behind?

*Tony Pipa:* Yeah, exactly, so leave no one behind. How do you ensure that it has the most benefit for the most amount of people?

And frankly, geography is going to be the difficult part of this. How do you get investment into difficult geographies as well, where it's going to be most difficult? So sometimes, that's very difficult, because it's conflict, or because of poor governance, like

we were talking about overseas. In the U.S., it's very difficult as well. Look at where most of the poverty and most of the Leave No One Behind agenda would need to be focused, even within the United States. It is very difficult to do place-based development and to attract the private capital that you're talking about in some of those places as well. There's actually sort of a –

*Patrick Fine:* A symmetry.

*Tony Pipa:* A symmetry, exactly. That was the exact word I was looking for. There is a symmetry between what we're going to have to be doing globally to achieve the goals, as well as within our own country.

*Patrick Fine:* I think that's a great place for us to conclude.

Just let me ask, finally, taking all of this into consideration, looking into the future, what's your perspective on the ability for us to achieve those goals and eradicate poverty by 2030?

*Tony Pipa:* So, I think we have the resources. I think we have the knowhow. We're getting the connectivity, where you think about infrastructure or just even about being connected the world over.

A big part of it is political will. That's at least what the SDGs as a collective framework were about, trying to build that political will, at least at the government level, and head to government to head to government and signing up and saying it. I think it is diffusing into other stakeholders.

Will it be fast enough and strong enough to be able to buck winds that could undermine it? I don't know. I am an eternal optimist. That's why I was involved in developing these goals from the beginning, and so I think we can do it, and I think, actually, the goals can in some ways be a way to unify lots of differing perspectives that right now are creating divisions for us not to be able to do it, but I'm also a pragmatist and a realist, and I know that there's a possibility we might not hit the mark.

*Patrick Fine:* Well, I'm going to, I'm going to latch onto your optimism that this is something that we can do. We'll take stock. We'll plan a future podcast where we come back maybe three years from now, at the five-year point.

*Tony Pipa:* Sign me up. *[Laughter]*

*Patrick Fine:* And we'll take stock. Tony, thanks for a terrific conversation.

*Tony Pipa:* Thanks for having me. This has really been wonderful.

*Patrick Fine:* And thanks again to our listeners, both new and returning. This is the culmination of our podcast series on the Sustainable Development Goals. We couldn't have had a better guest to talk about the SDGs and their future prospects and their creation.

You can listen to past episodes dealing with the SDGs with civil society leaders, members of government, the philanthropy community. You can listen to previous episodes on SoundCloud and iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts. So, stay tuned.

We'll continue with the Deeper Look podcasts in 2018 with a new theme but similar thought-provoking conversations on development effectiveness. Subscribe today to get the first episode of 2018.