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Voiceover: *A Deeper Look. Exploring what works and what doesn't in development and the changes we can take to turn our ideas into action.*

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Patrick Fine: Hello, listeners. I'm Patrick Fine, CEO of FHI 360. Welcome to our final episode of the 2019 season of *A Deeper Look* podcast. As our returning listeners know, this year we've explored the darker side of development, the paradoxes and unintended consequences of development efforts.

We've had fascinating conversations that have spanned from corruption to protecting from sexual exploitation and abuse to the challenges that growing up in a refugee camp pose. We haven't shied away from discussing the tough topics that confront us when we're doing human development work, and I want to thank all of the participants of this year's podcast for bringing candid, unvarnished perspectives to the challenges that we face.

For this final episode, we're going to take a deeper look into the dilemmas in addressing poverty and inequality here in the U.S. I have a wonderful guest to help us explore this topic, David Dodson, President of MDC.

David, welcome to *A Deeper Look* podcast.

David Dodson: Thank you so much, Patrick. I'm delighted to be here.

Patrick Fine: So, David, in this podcast, we have typically explored the challenges facing human development work in an international context, but those challenges are really the same no matter where you're working. And, I'm very excited to be able to hear your perspective on the challenges and the paradoxes faced in doing development work in here the U.S. FHI 360 works in the U.S.

I know MDC has a long history going back to the 1960s. It's one of the premier development agencies in the United States working in the South. Can we start with you just telling us a little bit about MDC and yourself?

David Dodson: Certainly, certainly. Well, first about MDC. Fifty, 60 some years ago, North Carolina, where we, like you, are based, had a

remarkable governor called Terry Sanford. In those days, the governor was limited to one term.

So, toward the end of his first term he became emboldened, and he looked around and said, "Our state is not keeping pace with the rest of the nation, and we are burdened by poverty and we are burdened by a legacy of structural racism." He didn't use those terms, but that's effectively what it meant. And, he was faced with a – an, an uncooperative legislature.

So, he had a stroke of genius and said, "Let's create an independent entity, funded by philanthropy and business, to pioneer methods of addressing the intersection of poverty and race. We will call it the North Carolina Fund. It will last for five years, and then if there remains unfinished business," hmm, "we will create some legacy institutions to carry on strands of the work."

So, the North Carolina Fund got some incredible things started. It, it created a network of community action agencies. It was an early partner for the War on Poverty. It pioneered something called the North Carolina Volunteers, which were a prototype for VISTA.

Patrick Fine: Hmm.

David Dodson: And, it really empowered the voices of low-income people to speak their truth and their needs and to work on solutions. It was governed by a group of government, nonprofit and business leaders to come together, a biracial, maybe multiracial, group, including Native Americans in North Carolina.

It did not finish all of its work.

Patrick Fine: You mean the human development challenges persisted? *[Laughs]*

David Dodson: They could not be solved in – this was the 1960s. We thought we could do a lot of things, *[laughs]* but it didn't work. Uh, at least we didn't finish the job.

So, a legacy institution was created to deal with employment, employability, employment discrimination, and that was called the Manpower Development Corporation. That name has since been shortened to MDC.

But, the through-line between those early days and today is that

human development and the ability of people to address their circumstances through education and work, through attaching to what we do have here, a vibrant economy, that becomes the kind of central continuing through-line for the work with MDC.

Now, of course connecting isn't the only thing that will address poverty because there's structural barriers. There are mindset challenges. There are policy barriers.

But, the end vision is still the same, that if we can prepare and connect people on the margins of the economy to be able to participate, advance, contribute and thrive, we will have created some preconditions for an uplift in the society and particularly for people and places who have been left on the margins.

Patrick Fine: So, would you say that the approach that, that you take is one of increasing the opportunity for people to participate in a meaningful way in the economic and social life of their communities?

David Dodson: It's about avenues of participation, it's about the levers to equip people to participate on an equal footing and it's about clearing the barriers to equitable participation. So, participation and connection, getting on the escalator, if you will, and being able to rise is the picture.

But, if the escalator isn't working or if you are a long distance from the first tread, there's other work that has to be done so that the normal kind of patterns of participation are available to people who aren't prepared, who don't know how to get there, who have been blocked by discrimination, and for whom policy does not facilitate entry. So, we're concerned with …

Patrick Fine: Or it could – policy could even block it.

David Dodson: It could even block it. There's work with the individual, but there's also work with the culture and systems that can either make it easy or hard for an individual to connect. Our myth, and it is a myth in America, is that we are a land of upward mobility and that every generation is able to achieve material well-being greater than the previous generation.

And, if we look at data which are now coming out, if you look at a map of America and you chart where economic mobility, the ability of someone to rise to a higher level than the situation of

their birth in material terms, economic mobility is most constrained in the Southeastern United States.

And if you look at that map – this is why I like using maps.

Patrick Fine: Like FHI 360, you're an evidence-based organization.

David Dodson: Evidence-based, and the – and the evidence here is there is something pervasive in the American South that keeps people who were born at the bottom stuck or chained at the bottom disproportionately.

Patrick Fine: And, is that primary racial?

David Dodson: It has racial manifestations. It has gender manifestations. And above all, the reason that having an evidence-based approach that looks at a geography is important is that the research is telling us the conditions that either advance or impede mobility are place-based.

There's something about the way place is organized, about the prevailing mindset regarding opportunity, about the prevailing narrative of who can and should advance and who shouldn't that is particular to the South. And, you said this series is going to get into some challenging issues.

Patrick Fine: Mm-hmm.

David Dodson: Years ago, when I was early at MDC, we had a wonderful economist, Ed Bishop, who was a distinguished rural economist, president of several universities, advisor to several presidents. And, he was fond of saying that the American South is a colonial society and a colonial economy.

Patrick Fine: And, what did he mean by that?

David Dodson: He meant that in a colonial economy, the benefits of development accrue less to indigenous people than to people who come from elsewhere to exploit the opportunities.

Patrick Fine: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

David Dodson: And, if you look at the South historically, and we are data-informed and historically informed, we have been a region that has

had a model of economic development based on low wages, low taxes, low investment and extraction rather than value-adding processes to natural resources.

So, that has parallels. You could take that economic formula and apply it to many parts of the so-called developing world.

Patrick Fine: Absolutely.

David Dodson: And, that is what sets the American South apart. When you layer on the mindsets that allow that kind of colonial practice to endure, and there you do get to structural racism, those are the factors that have to be disassembled if we expect the pathways to opportunity to actually operate.

Patrick Fine: And, and how do we do that? How do we disassemble those factors?

David Dodson: Well, this is the real hard work. What we have found to be powerful is, number one, start with data that describes the emerging future in uncompromising terms and paints a picture of the things that cannot be avoided.

You look at a mobility map. If the likelihood that a child born low-income in the South is only gonna have a five percentage point chance of rising from the bottom quintile to the top, those are far weaker than the natural odds, which would be a 20 percent likelihood.

If you show that and you then say, "Our American Dream says that no one should be constrained by the circumstances of their birth," you have a terrible dichotomy between the reality that we are reproducing and the myth that we say we live by. So, you set up the cognitive dissonance.

Patrick Fine: And, and there's this contradiction there.

David Dodson: It's a contradiction. The other piece of data that tell us we must change our ways is demographic data, that we are becoming in the South, as we are in the country as a whole, much more racially pluralistic, and the workforce of the future, the people who are going to fuel our labor force and our economy, are increasingly coming from the very segments of the population that we historically have underinvested in deliberately, people of color.

Patrick Fine: Mm-hmm.

David Dodson: So basically, you said, "How can we survive as we are increasingly dependent on people that we historically have underinvested in unless we change our mindset about investment?"

Now, those are hard truths to recognize, but there are people who are motivated by shared interest more than self-interest, and our approach is to find those leaders who are motivated to change current circumstances and build a different future and work with them.

And what that means in this environment, where there are many crosscurrents, is a great deal of local work with people who are motivated to change local systems and conditions and then amplify what they're doing in an advocacy voice to argue for broader policy change.

Patrick Fine: So, that goes back to your point about place-based work.

David Dodson: Yes, yes.

Patrick Fine: I guess building from the grassroots or at the community level.

David Dodson: Yes.

Patrick Fine: When you look at place-based approaches, what does the dichotomy between urban and rural look like? 'Cause we hear a lot about that in the political discourse today.

David Dodson: Yeah. One dichotomy or one challenge, if you will – and we've done a lot of work in rural areas in the Mississippi Delta, in Appalachian Kentucky and West Virginia, in the Rio Grande Valley.

One challenge is the absence of civic and institutional infrastructure, places where people can gather and institutions through which they can do their work.

Patrick Fine: What about churches?

David Dodson: We have worked with churches. You're asking some very difficult questions, and unfortunately I, I may have to speak the truth.

Patrick Fine: Please do.

David Dodson: It, it has – having a master of divinity degree, I'm somewhat qualified to speak about churches. And the sad thing is that, in the South, the white Protestant Church has never been a champion of equity.

Patrick Fine: Never?

David Dodson: No.

Patrick Fine: Uh-huh.

David Dodson: And so, it is a challenge to rely on the church in most places to take a countercultural view of society and work for change. I'm not saying it's impossible, but it is a challenge. And, we – and we've done work to try to inspire congregations to reach beyond themselves. And, Martin Luther King: "The most segregated hour in America is 11:00 on Sunday morning."

Patrick Fine: Mm-hmm.

David Dodson: So, you know, that is an infrastructure that is challenging. The infrastructure that we have typically found to be more adaptable, and it is pervasive in rural areas, are community colleges, principally because they have a mission of building human capital. But, many of them also have a mission of working on economic and workforce development and entrepreneurship.

So, they are naturally oriented to both the supply and the demand side of the economy, and they are the form of higher education where low- and moderate-income people most typically show up to engage. So, we've had a lot of success with them.

Patrick Fine: And they're secular institutions as well.

David Dodson: Yes, yes.

Patrick Fine: It would be interesting to look at that difference between secular institutions, which you say are more open or better conduits.

David Dodson: Open, yes. Less, less b– less burdened.

Patrick Fine: Less burdened.

David Dodson: *[Laughs]* Yes.

Patrick Fine: That's a good way to put it, less burdened in terms of addressing these social challenges versus the religious institutions, who carry this set of values.

David Dodson: They're more embedded in a culture that has aspects of these self-limiting characteristics.

Patrick Fine: Or of the structural …

David Dodson: Of the struct– yes. Yeah.

Patrick Fine: … racism or other kind of structural …

David Dodson: And, the other thing is churches in the South are better at the charitable relief of immediate need than they are at advocacy for the change of systems.

Patrick Fine: Yeah.

David Dodson: So, even if they aren't burdened by the cultural inheritance – and it's important. We need – we need charitable relief of immediate need.

Patrick Fine: Right.

David Dodson: But, that is where religious institutions typically are more comfortable.

Patrick Fine: That's their strength.

David Dodson: Yes, and we need that strength.

Patrick Fine: Yeah, that makes sense.

David Dodson: But, we can't ask necessarily them to move toward systems change or advocacy. They can be part of a coalition, and very often bringing that kind of spirit of new possibility is a very important part of a conversation. But, they typically are better members of a collaborative than leaders of a change effort.

Patrick Fine: Yeah, that ties into something we often talk about, uh, in building coalitions, which is to have them fit for purpose.

David Dodson: Yes.

Patrick Fine: So, you don't ask institutions to do things that they're not really well equipped to do.

David Dodson: Yes. When you're in a rural area, they're thinly populated. There's thin capacity. People don't necessarily have a lot of free time to devote. Creating those fit-for-purpose entities, it takes more work to create the environments where that is possible.

But it's not impossible. There's – there are very vigorous community-based entities in Appalachia. There are examples of similar things in the Mississippi and Arkansas Delta that are emergent.

So, it's not impossible. It's just deeper. As you say, the issues of poverty are deeply embedded in rural America as just the nature of the rural economy is threatened.

Patrick Fine: You've been with MDC since 1987.

David Dodson: 1987.

Patrick Fine: And you've been the president and leader of the organization since 1999.

David Dodson: '99.

Patrick Fine: So, so for 20 years.

David Dodson: Yes.

Patrick Fine: How have you seen the evolution of both the challenges and the responses to addressing human development needs in this country?

David Dodson: I think of evolution as being directional, and I guess what I have experienced is more of an ebb and flow that is a – high tides of engagement and low tides of *[laughs]* exit. And, the two factors that propel the tide, one is political commitment and the other that we see is philanthropic commitment, and sometimes those work in harmony.

When – under the Clinton administration here, where we had a president from the South who understood firsthand what the challenges were in poor rural areas, there was a flowering of attention to rural development and rural development initiatives, in part because that was part of the lived experience of the chief executive.

Patrick Fine: Right.

David Dodson: And, philanthropy accompanied that energy and in many cases contributed to it. So, you saw a real rise in attention to community development: finance organizations, lending organizations that were rooted in rural and low-income communities that could have relationships with the federal government for capital and were reinforced by philanthropy. So, that was a high-water mark for bottom-up, community-oriented change and infrastructure building and resource development.

With a change in administration that was paralleled by a change in philanthropic focus, particularly in terms of rural America, there was a, a rapid vanishing of support for rural areas. By the early 2000s, we had fallen from that peak of engagement and focused priority, for instance, on rural areas.

Patrick Fine: That's very interesting timing because that's right around the same time where you have the impact of globalization really changing the, the shape of the labor force, the type of jobs that are available not just in rural areas, but in the South.

David Dodson: Yes, exactly. Exactly, exactly. Yeah, yeah. That change was coming for a long time, but perhaps the social attention to rural and small towns that existed in the early 1990s masked some of the undergoing …

Patrick Fine: Some of that change that was happening.

David Dodson: Yes, yeah. Real, real erosion. And, now we find ourselves in a time when the rural population is significantly decreasing. There's migration into cities very often of rural people – this is true in the South – who come to cities seeking opportunity but don't have the educational preparation to connect to it.

Patrick Fine: Which is exactly what we deal with internationally.

David Dodson: Of, of course. Yes, yes. So, the rural poor migrate to cities and become the urban poor. And, if you look at some of our large cities in the South – Atlanta, Memphis – these are places where migrating people come and enter economies that are far more dependent on knowledge assets for someone to be able to move forward, and because of the state of rural schools and rural preparation they often don't have it.

So, this is a real parallel between global forces of urbanization and what we see in the American South. And, you go back to what MDC got started with. Terry Sanford was also a champion for education, and he was a major force in building North Carolina's community college system into what was and still is one of the most pervasive systems in the – in the country.

That was to create an educational infrastructure that would allow rural people to be skilled for opportunities, both urban and rural.

David Dodson: And, and we have not maintained our investment in that infrastructure, even though one might argue it's more needed today, as needed today, as it was then. So, …

Patrick Fine: Well, I think it probably is, is more needed because you see the nature of the economy, the types of jobs, the structure of the labor force, and the impact of new technology posing a whole different set of challenges to the workforce.

David Dodson: Exactly, exactly. Exactly.

Patrick Fine: And, the community colleges and other educational institutions are the frontline institutions to help manage this transformation that's happening in our country.

David Dodson: A– absolutely.

Patrick Fine: And, it's not just in our country.

David Dodson: Yes.

Patrick Fine: It's across the world. And, one of the reasons I am so happy to have you pointing out the challenges that we're facing here in the South of the U.S. is because there's the same challenges that countries around the world are facing, and it reinforces that

principle in the Sustainable Development Goals that essentially said human development challenges are universal.

David Dodson: Yes.

Patrick Fine: They're not confined to developing countries and developed countries. There's not developing counties and developed counties. These challenges affect society across society.

David Dodson: Yes, absolutely. And, some of the most interesting work that we have been privileged to do has been the work supported by the Ford Foundation that actually got development leaders from abroad to come to the American South for interactions.

Patrick Fine: Mm-hmm.

David Dodson: And, it was both fascinating to see how international insights into building indigenous infrastructure and community voice could actually inspire folks in this country and point a way for what they might do.

Patrick Fine: We've also seen that at FHI 360, where we have programs here in the U.S. that are informed by practice overseas and then vice-versa.

David Dodson: Exactly.

Patrick Fine: And so, you start to get authentic exchange.

David Dodson: Ex– ex– that's, that is really so. About 20 years ago, we were working extensively in the United States to strengthen rural community colleges in the poorest parts of America.

And, we were invited by the Ford Foundation that had an idea that this form of practical community-centered higher education that is very much rooted in the community needs and culture could be something that could help in this case the new nation of Namibia think about its education and development infrastructure.

So, for five years off and on, we worked in northern Namibia with a group of leaders in a very inclusive process to take the ideas underneath the American community college system, practically oriented education that was community-centered and technical and very much grounded in speaking to local conditions, and use the

community engagement process to help leaders in northern Namibia, which is the populated part of that country, figure out how to create a new campus of the national university, which was based in the capital.

Patrick Fine: Right.

David Dodson: And, it was a – it was a wonderful process that went on for several years of having Namibian folk come to America, rural America, and go to the Rio Grande Valley and to Indian reservations and see how an institution could be built by people to reflect and support the conditions of local development.

And, that campus has developed, and it was a wonderful exchange of an American model put in a – in an African context with the principles of engagement by people to shape the fabric of the institution to serve their needs.

Patrick Fine: I've actually visited …

David Dodson: Oh my gosh.

Patrick Fine: … that campus before.

David Dodson: Oh my gosh.

Patrick Fine: It's great – it's great to hear the backstory there. There's something that I want to highlight that you've mentioned in this podcast that I think is a really important insight and takeaway for our listeners, which is we often talk about development progress.

And, embedded in that term is the notion of a linear process that, uh, is always moving forward in a positive direction. But, you phrased it as the tides of development that can come in and they can go out.

David Dodson: Yes.

Patrick Fine: And, I think that thinking of development work or the development challenges more in terms of tides, and those tides are carried or influenced by politics, by economic forces that are – that are beyond the community, it's a very good way – it, it's a very effective way to conceive of development work.

And, I think the theory of change behind that notion is more apt, is more aligned with reality, than when we speak in terms of development progress.

David Dodson: Well, and I think that has been the experience we have seen in some of these hard places where you do have waves of concern and investment followed by long periods of withdrawal. And, the question is what kind of vessel can be put into that environment to help move with the tide?

Patrick Fine: Right, right.

David Dodson: And, and we've spent a lot of time trying to identify, strengthen or equip or in some cases build place-based institutions that can be present when situations change in adaptable circumstances.

Patrick Fine: I like that term "adaptable" because that has been one of the themes that we have repeatedly come across as we think about the challenges, uh, confronting the development community.

And so, we've talked a little bit about the challenges, the changing nature of those challenges, that this, this this notion of continual progress is a myth. You've mentioned place-based approaches, and you've talked a lot about the importance of building community infrastructure, you know, localizing things.

What other responses do you see emerging to address the challenges?

David Dodson: Well, one of the things we are working on now that does I guess combine a place-based approach with a community infrastructure is our work to strengthen or equip more place-based philanthropic resources in the South that can be sources of what we call social venture capital for the South.

Patrick Fine: Mm-hmm.

David Dodson: So, I want to give you a, a statistic. It was said a few years ago that the American South has a third of U.S. poverty in terms of people in poverty, a quarter of the U.S. population, and a sixth of U.S. philanthropic assets. And, and …

Patrick Fine: Right. So a very – a big imbalance there.

David Dodson: A big imbalance. And in fact, the largest foundation in the South, the Duke Endowment, about $3.5 billion, almost $4 billion, its assets are just, what, ten percent of what's in the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation alone.

Patrick Fine: Right.

David Dodson: So, if you believe that philanthropy can be society's venture capital and that we are dramatically undercapitalized relative to our needs, and if we recognize that there are forms of philanthropic infrastructure that are developing across the South now, principally in community foundations and in hospital conversion foundations where a public hospital is sold to a private company and the resulting funds become a public endowment, if you look at that landscape, there are significant pockets of philanthropic resource growing across the South that are place-based.

Patrick Fine: So, so you see an increase in philanthropic resources directed to the South or available?

David Dodson: They're available. They are situated in the South and available for the work of place-based equity-oriented development.

Patrick Fine: Right. And …

David Dodson: But they are not oriented *[laughs]* to that. And so, we are creating now an, an institute for Southern philanthropy. It will launch in January.

Patrick Fine: MDC is?

David Dodson: Yes. And, we will work with place-based foundations that are mission-dedicated to investing in communities and help them build an analysis of the development challenges and the challenges to advancing equity and shared well-being, not in a linear way that assumes a straight line of progress, but in an adaptive way that allows them to test some strategies, build, um, community infrastructure that is in fact adaptable, and iterate their way through investment to help their communities be better off. And, we're very excited about this.

Patrick Fine: Yeah, that sounds really interesting. When you talk about place, what form does that take? Is that a city? Is it a region?

David Dodson: Can be both. There's a very powerful example about 50 miles north of where we are sitting right now in Durham in, in a place called Danville, Virginia. Fifteen years ago, that community sold its public hospital to a private company, resulting in $200 million of endowment.

And, through some advising from MDC – we had had a prior association with them – the community elected to turn that endowment into the corpus of a philanthropic foundation dedicated to helping a community that once had been enormously wealthy with textiles and tobacco recover its economic footing and spread well-being and prosperity to a much larger base. This place had – it had been a mill town that lost its mill.

Patrick Fine: Right.

David Dodson: And, through dedicated, strategic, very wise investment in education, in community infrastructure and technology infrastructure and in community mindset, and I can tell you a little bit about that, they really have begun to create a new consciousness, a new sense of the possible, in a region that thought it was simply on a downward slope.

Patrick Fine: So, you've mentioned the, the importance of mindset multiple times.

David Dodson: Mi– exactly, exactly.

Patrick Fine: So, can you say more about what is that mindset that can overcome some of these darker tendencies that we've seen holding people back or creating more, more inequity?

David Dodson: So, one important mindset is the mindset of agency. Do people believe things happen to them or they can cause things to happen? I think that is absolutely fundamental.

And, you know, back to the American South. In a region that has been characterized by extraction and colonialism, personal agency is not a virtue that is *[laughs]* encouraged.

Patrick Fine: Mm-hmm.

David Dodson: And, and when the economy goes away, when the tides go out, very often there is a residual mindset that's been built up over

generations that, "We're dependent on somebody else telling us what to do."

Patrick Fine: Right.

David Dodson: And so, a critical mindset is I don't really like the word, but an imaginative or, or, or entrepreneurial I was going to say mindset that says, "We somehow are capable of creating an alternative future to the present that we see today."

Patrick Fine: Well, and that ties into your concept of social venture capital as well.

David Dodson: Yeah, exactly. So what happened in this town of Danville, they had an endowment, but there was a mindset. There was – they will tell you. There was a mill town mindset.

The millworkers wait for the boss man – it was a boss *man* – to say, "Thou shalt do this." And, you internalize that, and you lose your sense of agency. You just don't do – you never step out of bounds.

And so, the foundation decided, "What can we do to change that?' And, somebody hit on a very wonderful idea. "We're gonna make small amounts of money available – $1,000.00, $2,500.00, $5,000.00 – with very little paperwork, and we're gonna call them Make It Happen grants."

And, people can just apply to make something happen. It might be, "Our neighborhood needs a playground," or, "We'd like to have a community garden," or, "We'd like to start a tutoring." It was just something.

And, the idea of it was that the what of it mattered almost less than the fact that people were saying, "I'd like to try to do something."

Patrick Fine: And, they were allowed to take initiative.

David Dodson: And, they were allowed to do it. And, the presence of that large foundation supporting, validating the agency – the latent agency of people, really, that over several years, lightbulbs started to go off.

"If we could – if we can build a neighborhood pray – playground, maybe we can advocate to have a better school. Maybe we can

advocate to – " It really created a ripple effect.

So, I think in, in dispirited places, that ability to cultivate a mindset of agency is really, really important.

Patrick Fine: That's a great point. I see a parallel in international work. When I first started working in Africa, there was this widespread myth or belief amongst the international development workers that African cultures were not entrepreneurial.

David Dodson: Wow.

Patrick Fine: And what, uh, uh, has become clear to me is that all people are entrepreneurial if they're allowed to be.

David Dodson: Exactly, exactly.

Patrick Fine: It is a natural human quality.

David Dodson: Exactly, exactly.

Patrick Fine: And, that you need enabling environments to, to allow that quality to be pursued and that, as those enabling environments have grown, you've seen this outpouring of entrepreneurship and of initiative and of innovation and creativity that, that then raises up communities and societies.

David Dodson: I think that's absolutely true. And, when that can be a shared sense, when people can come together in a civic entrepreneurship, it really can be quite possible. And, I think this is – this characteristic is what can set apart a community that is able to weather the, the ebb and flow to one that gets either overwhelmed or, or stranded.

I, I think this idea of an enabling environment to allow human creativity to, to flourish is very, very important. And in, in terms of philanthropy, it almost matters – these foundations – it matters less what they fund than that they create an enabling environment that allows people's creativity to, to flourish.

And, that means practicing the virtue of respect and belief in the inherent capability of people to do something different, and we have not always had that.

Patrick Fine: So, that would be one of the darker sides of development, that we haven't trusted people or that we haven't –

David Dodson: I think so.

Patrick Fine: We haven't, um, promoted that fundamental belief in people's own agency.

David Dodson: We have not. We have not, and I, I do think it's easy to fall, to become susceptible to that belief, that what people need is my wisdom and not their, their, their knowledge.

Patrick Fine: *[Laughs]* Yes.

David Dodson: And, I think this is something we always have to be reminded of, and there is – there is enormous wisdom. This is one of the reasons that it's very satisfying to work in the South and I'm sure it is satisfying to work in other developing societies because the assets are so rich and the culture is so rich. There is so much to build on. There is so much that keeps people committed to the places where they are when they could leave.

As my friend who ran the Danville Foundation said, "I can only invest in a glass that is half-full," which I really love. And, and the fact is a lot of glasses are already half-full. We just may not see, see them to be that way.

Patrick Fine: So, this is a wonderful note to end this season's deeper look into the darker side of development. So, we have explored many of the contradictions and many of the dilemmas in doing human development work.

But, I love the fact that we're ending with the notion of human agency and of a glass that is half-full, and that when we see it as half-full, when we recognize the inherent, uh, ability and quality of people to take responsibility for their own development, that that mentality then becomes, uh, the key to addressing human development challenges.

David Dodson: I, I think it might well be. *[Laughs]*

[Music]

Patrick Fine: So, thank you for that. Thank you for that wonderful analogy of, uh, thinking of progress, um, as tides, um, that, that come in and out. And, to end this season, I am going to ask you two questions that I have been asking all of our guests this year.

Um, the first question is what is something that almost no one agrees with you on?

David Dodson: *[Laughs]* Oh my heavens. Parts of the South that are chronically poor are not places to be pitied. They're places to be understood and their assets supported.

Patrick Fine: Yes.

David Dodson: I really think we are castigated for the place where we live, and that causes us not to see profound assets and very good people.

Patrick Fine: And potential.

David Dodson: And potential.

Patrick Fine: Yeah, that's great. Thank you for that, David. And, then my final question to you is what's one lesson you've learned that you'd like to share with our listeners?

David Dodson: Practice humility on a daily basis.

Patrick Fine: I couldn't agree more with you. It's important to remind ourselves that authentic development work is grounded in humility.

David Dodson: Exactly. It's walking with people, not in front of them, and that is the joy of it, I think.

Patrick Fine: David, thanks so much for a terrific conversation.

David Dodson: Thank you.

Patrick Fine: Listeners, thank you for tuning in during 2019. I think you'll agree with me this was a wonderful way to end our deeper look into the darker side of development.

You can also explore episodes from previous seasons. We have a rich library looking at the sustainable development goals, looking at emergency response, and then this year's look at the darker side

of development. It's been great having you all with us.

As we conclude the 2019 season, I want to give a shout-out to *A Deeper Look*'s producer, Katherine Wise, who is the genius behind these terrific episodes. I also want to thank everybody who has sent in comments. They have been really useful in helping shape the conversations in the episodes.

And, I hope you will be joining us in 2020 for the next season of *A Deeper Look*. We'll have a new theme. We are going to explore the shape of things to come in human development where we are going to be talking to leaders in the development field about the trends, the challenges, the issues that are going to shape our work in the future.

[Music]

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