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Building Good Foundations: Skills for effective engagement in sustainable development

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Geoscientists have an important role to play in sustainable development, using their knowledge of Earth to improve disaster risk reduction, natural resource management, access to protected water resources, and infrastructure development.

The application of this knowledge to sustainable development projects, however, requires a range of skills beyond a competence in technical geoscience. Cultural understanding, cross-disciplinary communication, diplomacy, community mobilization and participation, knowledge exchange, and an understanding of social science research tools are good foundations that are necessary for geoscientists to engage in an effective manner, reducing the likelihood of a project failing or not having maximum impact. Topical and disciplinary knowledge, such as understanding social vulnerability, international policy frameworks, and development theory, are also necessary when working in development contexts.

The geoscience community should consider practical ways by which these skills can be nurtured at an early stage of a young geoscientist's training and career. Building good foundations could take place within established geoscience education courses, but also through engagement with extracurricular activities and agencies, such as the not-for-profit organization Geology for Global Development in the UK. By raising the profile of these skills, and suggesting practical ways by which they can be developed, it is hoped that geoscientists will be better equipped to operate internationally throughout their careers.

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References:

[1] Gill JC (2016) In: *Geoscience for the Public Good and Global Development: Toward a Sustainable Future*: Geological Society of America Special Paper 520, 1-8

