The dominant view on the role of developing countries in global norm diffusion is to see them as adopters rather than creators; ideas originate in ‘the West’ (or ‘the North’) and are promoted and diffused through to the rest of the world. This dominant view has begun to be challenged but skepticism remains. Browne and Weiss comment (mistakenly): ‘the importance of emerging powers in the UN development system is undeniable, but their influence over the shape of the post-2015 agenda is less clear’ (Browne and Weiss 2014). This paper argues that both actors and ideas from the Global South were particularly influential in shaping the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda which achieved a major normative shift in agenda as well as in the very conception of development. It provides a detailed account of how this happened focusing on the role of national governments, civil society, and individuals.