

FOCUS SESSION 18

Title of the Session: Delivering development results through good governance, transparency and effective institutions: Open Government, civic engagement, and open data as enablers of development goals

8am-9.15am Wednesday 16th April
Room: 1

Chair:

- Guillermo Cejudo (CIDE, Mexico)

Speakers/Panelists:

- H.E. Sheikha Lubna al Qasimi, Minister of International Cooperation and Development (United Arab Emirates)
- Hillevi Engström, Minister for International Development Cooperation (Sweden)
- Mireya Aguero, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (Honduras)
- Alejandro González, General Director of 'Gestión Social' (GESOC), (Mexico)
- Philipp Schönrock, Director, Center for Strategic International Studies (Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional – CEPEI), (Colombia).

Other speakers in the room:

- Dr Lei Lei Thein, Deputy Minister, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development (Myanmar)
- Mr. Mohammad Mejbahuddin Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance (Bangladesh)
- Nick Dyer, Director-General, Department for International Development (UK)
- Dr Kim, Taekyoon Assistant Professor of International Development, Graduate School of International Studies (GSIS), Seoul National University (Korea).
- Ania Calderon Mariscal, General Director of Digital Innovation of the Coordination of National Digital Strategy in the Office of the President of Mexico

Background on the session:

Open Government, Open Data and Civic Engagement as mechanisms for increased transparency and accountability, were identified as crucial elements for enhancing development effectiveness.

In the past three years, there has been growing interest in the concept of open government, with the launch in 2011 of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), an international initiative that seeks to make governments more transparent, open, accountable and responsive to their

citizens. The OGP and the Global Partnership share common interests in supporting CSO engagement, strengthening institutions and promoting open access to information. The session explored how these concepts can be applied to development cooperation in order to improve effectiveness in poverty eradication and enhance efforts that are responsive to the true needs of beneficiaries. In this discussion, the role of open data, citizen empowerment and effective institutions was explored with transparency as a common thread, not only on strategy and resource allocation, but also on impact both in donor countries and recipients.

Key outcomes from the session are as follows:

1) Publishing quality data in open format is essential to development cooperation effectiveness and accountability:

The session highlighted that data is a key component of decision-making processes in development cooperation, and therefore having timely, forward-looking and comprehensive data is crucial to making the right decisions. Access to quality data that allows stakeholders to monitor how development cooperation is allocated can lead to more effective coordination of efforts and can ensure accountability for donors and beneficiaries. To truly tap into the potential value of data, it is essential that it is published in open data format, and made available to citizens in an accessible manner. The widespread availability and use of quality data can lead to improved development efforts, and can empower governments, donors, and citizens to collaborate towards maximizing development impact.

2) Transparency is a fundamental basis for enhancing development cooperation:

The discussion conveyed the importance of transparency as a crucial ingredient for dialogue on the effectiveness of development cooperation. The session focused on the need to foster a culture of transparency and ensuring political will, capacity building and incentives to encourage and institutionalize transparency. Furthermore, the session called for a more direct linkage between transparency and development outcomes with a strong focus on publishing data on results and impact. The importance of meeting the needs of stakeholders at country level and building their capacity to use data were identified, as transparency is not only about publishing information but also making sure that it is useful, used, and supports global and national accountability. Transparency of information together with political will, technical capability and civic engagement, can lead to positive development outcomes.

3) The OGP serves as a valuable space for collaboration between citizens and governments:

Transparency and civic engagement are at the heart of the transition from aid assistance towards development cooperation. The former implies that donors and governments measure, understand and respond to the needs of aid recipients. Development for cooperation should begin from the standpoint that citizens can be active agents of their own development. In this sense, empowering citizens and providing them with access to information is crucial. This is at the heart of the theory of change of OGP; there is no cooperation without co-creation. OGP creates a space in which public reformers can sit at the same table in a constructive environment to co-create new ways of resolving public problems. Reformers inside and outside of the government structures need to work together effectively to bring about positive transformations in the lives of citizens around the world.

Overall, the session acknowledged the need to make development cooperation transparent and accessible to citizens, both from donor countries in terms of distribution, and from beneficiaries on feedback regarding the allocation and impact of development efforts. Transparency, open government and open data are powerful instruments to promote accountability and are essential to building trust and effective collaboration among governments, citizens and international organizations.