

*More than the sum of its partners: A dialogue on multi-stakeholder partnerships for development*

**Monday, 20 April 2015, 13:15 – 14:30, United Nations HQ, New York**

The governments of Mexico and the Netherlands, in their capacity as Co-Chairs of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC), co-hosted the side event – ‘*More than the sum of its partners: A dialogue on multi-stakeholder partnerships for development*’ on 20 April 2015 at United Nations headquarters in New York. Reflecting the diversity of development stakeholders, the event brought together participants from government, civil society, the private sector, foundations, and others to consider how multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSHPs) can contribute to the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The event was chaired by Lilianne Ploumen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands and Co-Chair of the GPEDC; and moderated by Jeroen Verheul, Special Envoy of the Co-Chair of the GPEDC. Panelists included Juan Manuel Valle Pereña, Executive Director of the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation; Winnie Byanyima, Director of Oxfam International; Parag Gupta, CEO of Waste Capital Partners India; Angela Hariche, Director of International Relations, Foundation Center; and Alex Thier, USAID Assistant Administrator for Policy, Planning, and Learning.

The discussion highlighted that inclusive partnerships are essential in bringing all partners to the table to tackle the ambitious universal development agenda post-2015. Participants agreed that **greater knowledge is required on establishing successful MSHPs**, including how to clarify roles and responsibilities of partners to best leverage diversity of skills-sets and resources. The discussion highlighted a number of key ingredients for successful MSHPs.

Participants noted that successful MSHPs should follow principles of effective development cooperation. They should be **inclusive**, with respect to membership and established decision-making processes, ensure joint ownership and **equality** among partners. Partnerships should strengthen **country ownership** of development and support **capacity building** of development partners. A focus on actions that produce **results** will help build the buy-in of the stakeholders for continuing the partnership. And following principles of **transparency** and **mutual accountability** will help to build trust between partners. Furthermore, they should **do no harm**, MSHPs need to contribute to delivering human rights and promoting good corporate behavior. Mr. Thier raised the example of USAID’s Feed the Future Initiative to support partnerships in the agricultural sector based on commitment to investing in country-owned plans that support results-based programs, and to aligning resources of diverse partners and stakeholders including private sector and civil society.

The discussion also highlighted that **incentives** for partners should be aligned to create a shared vision - partners should be encouraged to **play to their strengths**, while allowing space for **creativity and innovation**, including leveraging science and technology. Mr. Gupta, for example, highlighted the importance in their projects of ensuring incentives for local

governments, waste pickers, and other partners to use sustainable waste disposal methods, including composting and recycling. He also noted that incentives are introduced for funders – particularly development banks – who are paid back with interest based on outcomes.

In addition, participants raised the effective MSHP's require good **communication and dialogue**, which in turn depends on using **language** that is understood by and can motivate a diverse set of actors with distinct vocabularies. Ms. Hariche noted, for example, that foundations, in particular have a language and approach that differs from government, multilateral, or CSO development partners – a sentiment echoed by private sector representatives. Establishing early communication between partners was raised as a way to address such concerns, by incubating ideas, and bridging differences in language and decision-making structures. She noted that a set of guidelines for effective philanthropic engagement – which adapt an effectiveness approach to foundations' priorities – are being piloted in Mexico, India, Haiti, and Myanmar.

Participants also raised the importance of an **enabling policy environment**, with policies that allow and facilitate the engagement of various actors, including civil society, the private sector, and others, in development partnerships. At the same time, **targeted regulations** may also increase success in bringing the private sector on board as an accountable partner.

Participants also flagged that **imperfect partnership models present important learning opportunities** – an honest, in-depth look at what has not worked can allow important insights to be distilled from exchanges of lessons learned. Oxfam, for example raised the example of a health sector partnership in Lesotho between the government and Netcare (a South African company) in which key elements for effective MSHPs were missing, including transparency, inclusiveness of civil society, equality among partners, and results oriented action, resulting in an inflated project budget and the exclusion of local community views. But this experience can guide the establishment of effective partnerships going forward.

Going forward, the discussion raised the need to reflect the importance of MSHPs, as well as the principles of effective development cooperation, in the outcome of the **FfD Conference in Addis Ababa** (July 2015), including by showcasing concrete examples of effective partnerships, and lessons on success factors.

Participants also recognised the **GPEDC's role** as an important model of an inclusive, multi-stakeholder, result-focused partnership; as well as its value in supporting the quality of partnerships on the ground through political focus. Mr Valle emphasized the role of the GPEDC in providing a knowledge-hub for good practice on building and sustaining effective partnerships, which brings all development cooperation actors to the table in an inclusive manner.

In her concluding remarks, Minister Ploumen noted that partnerships require hard work and trust-building, with imperfect partnerships presenting important learning opportunities to identify the right recipe for a successful partnership. Ms. Ploumen noted the Netherlands has initiated a Global Partnership Initiative to promote knowledge-sharing on excellence in partnerships, and underlined the importance of showcasing examples and lessons from partnerships at the Addis Ababa Financing for Development conference.