

GPEDC Joint Support Team’s Reflection on the Advice from the Monitoring Advisory Group

DRAFT for discussion - January 2016

In December 2015, the [Monitoring Advisory Group](#) (MAG) of the [Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation](#) (GPEDC) shared two analytical pieces of technical advice with the Joint Support Team (JST), regarding:

- (A) [“The GPEDC ‘Theory of Change’: An exposition and critique”](#), and
- (B) [“MAG Response to the 2016 Progress Report Concept Note”](#).

This paper summarizes the JST’s main comments on these two technical contributions, as well as reflections of MAG’s advice on the approach for the current monitoring round and for the 2016 Progress Report. **Further discussion during the upcoming MAG meeting in New York (February 2016) will help refine this draft note going forward.**

Section A. Reflection on MAG’s GPEDC ‘Theory of Change’ paper

The JST appreciates the MAG’s initial assessment to clarify the rationale and expectations following the Busan high-level meeting that set in motion the Global Partnership’s monitoring mechanism –i.e. the underlying Theory of Change (ToC) driving GPEDC’s monitoring action and beyond.

The following paragraphs discuss the main comments from the JST and suggest ways to reflect these issues into the ongoing monitoring process or MAG review:

Initial assessment of GPEDC’s theory of change

A key initial observation is the lack of an *explicit* theory of change in GPEDC’s inception documents. The global principles and commitments around effective development co-operation agreed in the Busan Partnership agreement (BPa) were inspired both by previous work stemming from the Rome/Paris/Accra processes for effective development co-operation (EDC) and from the broadened scope and coverage of actors of the Busan process. The BPa –and GPEDC’s monitoring framework itself– resulted from a dynamic multi-stakeholder political negotiation that did not lend itself to articulate an explicit ToC in detail. While there was/is a broad consensus around the EDC principles (i.e. country ownership, focus on results, inclusive partnerships, transparency and accountability), the specification of these principles into the subset of Busan EDC commitments selected for GPEDC monitoring was not made explicit at the time. In light of this gap in the inception documents, the MAG attempted to retroactively reconstruct an *implicit* ToC based on the guiding statements of the Partnership’s governing bodies and *de facto* operational work of GPEDC stakeholders and secretariat. The exercise allowed the MAG making explicit the set of *assumptions* that drive GPEDC operations and strategic direction. The MAG presents an initial assessment of the robustness of these assumptions in the second part of the paper, as a guide for future work.

- **The JST agrees with this analytical approach, and proposes a way to further detail the initial description of GPEDC’s implicit ToC –if needed.** In order to help the MAG in refining the “implied generic theory of change for the GPEDC” (figure 1 in MAG paper), the JST stands ready to provide the MAG with further detail on the types of activities and actions carried out by GPEDC (in its three work streams: keeping parties accountable and fostering mutual learning throughout *monitoring*, implementation of agreed norms and commitments throughout *the global partnership initiatives*, and

maintaining international accountability and political momentum via high-level policy/political dialogue). This granularity in the detail will help all actors understand the planned synergies between the different work streams in setting the GPEDC *implicit* ToC in motion, and help test the robustness of the underlying assumptions made in this approach further.

In fleshing out the implicit ToC for GPEDC’s monitoring framework, the MAG raises strategic questions that may have implications for GPEDC as a whole, beyond the monitoring framework itself. The MAG emphasizes that GPEDC should have a greater role in achieving a more coherent, inclusive, efficient and effective approach in supporting country-level development processes. While acknowledging that the drivers of development are endogenous and domestic decision-making processes are politically contested and subjected to uncertainty and to political economy constraints, the development effectiveness agenda of the past decade and a half –and the principles of EDC agreed in Busan– provide a sound basis for pursuing commitments, action and activities that could support these processes with better joint work/stronger partnerships: the implicit ToC outlined by the MAG follows a causality chain where development impacts would be more effectively achieved when these agreed principles have been more fully implemented by all the relevant development actors/partners in country. It is proposed that improvements in the process-oriented activities being monitored (i.e. behavioral change on the way development actors relate to each other and work together) will lead to improved effective development cooperation, which will in turn lead to achieving better development results/impact. In the ToC assessment, the MAG recognizes that there are fundamental assumptions not fully articulated or tested, albeit they may have a significant influence on the chain to achieve greater development effectiveness. In particular, there are two sets of important assumptions that remain implicit: on *causality* and on *context*. On the first issue, the causality chain described above is the backbone of the work carried out by the development community, but it remains vague in the specifics (e.g. to what extent specific materializations of these principles, i.e. specific indicators, drive change). On the second issue, the MAG recognizes that context (whether in terms of political, organizational, institutional context; and/or in terms of respective capacities and resources) plays a major role in facilitating behavioral change as well as in carrying out effective monitoring, and in ensuring that these two will lead to more effective development cooperation. But context is not made an explicit assumption in the GPEDC’s inception documents or approach.

Making explicit the underlying assumptions supporting the fundamental logic of the GPEDC ToC is difficult at the moment, due to the type of existing consensus amongst the involved parties, and the need to build further evidence around them. As the MAG indicates, GPEDC’s had a politically-driven inception, which is reflected in its organizational arrangements and decision-making process. In addition, engagement in the Global Partnership’s activities is voluntary, lacking from *hard* mechanisms to enforce compliance at the country or global levels¹. Finally, a consequence of the implicit or tacit nature of the GPEDC’s principles and commitments monitoring since Busan is that there is not a common, agreed understanding among GPEDC stakeholders on what the particular implications of these specific Busan commitments are for each of them, nor regarding the allocation of responsibilities and expectations across stakeholders. That said, the 2015-2016 monitoring round offers a number of opportunities to gather data and views from the interested parties, in order to inform the review of the underlying ToC towards an interpretation that could generate greater consensus and foster ownership around the associated development effectiveness agenda.

- **The MAG’s review of GPEDC Monitoring Framework, supported by MAG-JST gathering of data, view and other sources of evidence to inform the review, offers an opportunity to test these hypotheses.** Some potential sources of evidence may include: the data reported and observed behavior during the monitoring round; the post-monitoring poll to participants; as well as feedback received from the

¹ As it is the case of the institutions hosting the GPEDC Secretariat (i.e. OECD, UNDP), the Global Partnership relies on *soft tools* such as open accountability, reputational incentives, multi-stakeholder dialogue mechanisms, knowledge sharing platforms, and mutual learning activities –with the objective of fostering policy transfer and/or imitation and incentivize “behavior change” among the relevant actors.

regional post-monitoring workshops, and from specific fora and dialogue processes involving developing country governments, providers, CSOs and other GPEDC actors. The 2016 Progress Report –combining findings from monitoring data and complementary evidence– offers an opportunity to *report* on the robustness of some of the implicit assumptions. Among others, one particular way in which we may test some GPEDC assumptions will be throughout assessing the effect of context on observed monitoring results; and in providing more voice to GPEDC stakeholders in highlighting/agreeing on existing bottlenecks and indicating potential policy suggestions to move forward.

Implications on the GPEDC scope and mandate (*medium-term horizon*)

The role and scope of the GPEDC vis-a-vis the widely agreed principles of effective development cooperation is one key strategic question that may need reflection. The Busan and Mexico high-level meetings and subsequent conversations within GPEDC’s Steering Committee have broadly supported the EDC principles (country ownership, focus on results, inclusive partnership, and transparency and accountability) as important guiding norms to achieve coherent, inclusive, efficient and effective development cooperation and thus strengthen partnerships for the development process. With the principles now engraved in the international Sustainable Development Goals and framework (SDGs, FfD), the key questions posed in the MAG’s note on the GPEDC theory of change are:

- **What role *should* GPEDC have in supporting the policy dialogue and political support around/implementation of/compliance with the EDC principles? And how *can* GPEDC play that role?** GPEDC’s stakeholders and the MAG seem to agree that the Global Partnership should be playing a role in terms of monitoring progress in implementation, in providing a unique inclusive multi-stakeholder platform for policy dialogue and mutual learning, and in supporting country-level implementation.
- **If GPEDC steps up to that role in supporting the principles for EDC, a series of related strategic questions follow:**
 - How *should* the implicit assumptions around causality and context be addressed/adjusted in order to strengthen GPEDC’s overall impact?
 - Shall GPEDC assume a role in “championing” the principles being translated into actions? If so, is it through facilitating/negotiating specific commitments and providing a space for mutual accountability for implementing such commitments?
 - Do we aim at gaining recognition and a greater role in implementation at the country level? And, if so, what is the scope of work that GPEDC could do in, for example, promoting and assessing in-country enabling frameworks for multi-stakeholder dialogue and actions that translate the principles into actions (e.g. focusing on facilitating an enabling environment for inclusive development; promoting related institutional, legal and regulatory reforms; capacity building)?

In addressing these questions, the strong political drive and support of the GPEDC should be recognized: the EDC agenda is widely shared and there is a broad endorsement of the general principles of effective development cooperation – with various stakeholders articulating specific (differentiated) commitments. With the general principles of EDC engraved in the FfD and reflected in the SDGs at general level, we may consider further analysis to make explicit the causal mechanisms as an exercise to “deepening” on these principles – i.e. how to translate these principles into actions through differentiated commitments that may emerged from various stakeholders and result on positive impacts on development cooperation, and on development more generally.

- **Building on the strengths of the GPEDC, we suggest that the ToC articulates and clarifies these causality-related assumptions using a country-level perspective** (i.e. how all development actors operate in practice in recipient countries, and what are the drivers of change). To this end, and as

suggested by the MAG, observed change in country cases (i.e. how the behavior of various stakeholders/constituencies evolved in GPEDC participating countries) could illustrate and add a greater level of granularity to the review and refinement of GPEDC's theory of change –potentially supported by cross-country analysis.

This exercise can help clarify the effectiveness of various incentives for the type of behavioral change of development actors that could enhance development effectiveness. At the moment, GPEDC incentivizes and tracks behavior change and associated institutional reforms which are expected to have a positive impact on the quality of development cooperation, partnerships and financing for development –and ultimately on development. However, no strategic prioritization and sequencing are possible without an understanding of the country-specific impacts of the different types of behavior/behavior change. Including that dimension (relevance) into the analysis can help reconcile the purely technical work (effectiveness of policy/institutional/governance reforms) with the political and managerial dimensions.

These discussions could not only inform a revised scope for GPEDC's monitoring framework, but also GPEDC's revised mandate and working arrangements. The discussions and related review could also inform the content of the HLM 2 outcome document, depending on the ambition and vision of the HLM 2 outcome document.

Implication on GPEDC's monitoring framework *(short-term horizon)*

The MAG's paper on GPEDC's ToC also points out towards some useful suggestions that could potentially be taken on board in the implementation of the ongoing monitoring round as well as through the evidence reporting and type of analysis included in the 2016 Progress Report. The MAG recognizes that there are distinctive conditions and contexts for the countries and regions participating in the GPEDC monitoring rounds. This is in turn reflected in different needs and expectation for change. The MAG also suggests that a focused analysis would be useful to test assumptions on the inclusive character of multi-stakeholder processes triggered by the monitoring rounds, and on the existing power relations at the country level that may affect the process.

- **The JST will explore ways to refine the analysis and reporting to accommodate these considerations.** First, it is suggested to further disaggregate data (at the country/region levels). Likewise, a more granular and contextual assessment (i.e. with a characterization of the diverse country and regional contexts to help interpret the monitoring data) could also help in testing the context-related assumptions that may impact the extent of observed behavior change. Country case studies can also help clarify causality-related assumptions. As the MAG suggests in the paper, a focused analysis would be useful to test the assumption of inclusive multi-stakeholder process in their development and negotiation strengthens the hand of the least powerful actors relative to more powerful ones.

Implications in order to strengthen the relevance of GPEDC's monitoring framework

As the MAG paper noted, there is a need to clarify and test the assumption about the causality, and identifying key assumption about the context, as well as where the monitoring should focus on in terms of promoting behavioral changes. In this context, the MAG's paper included some useful elements of possible indicators around behavioral change – such as existence of policy reform, institutional reform, enabling laws and regulations, and the emergence of new coordination mechanisms as important indicators of behavior change (in case of providers and recipient). Further discussion in the context of the upcoming February 2016 MAG meeting will be needed to prioritize JST's and MAG's work in exploring an expanded scope that could be more in line with the needs and expectation of all GPEDC stakeholders, and reflect the priorities, performance and behavior change of all the relevant actors engaged in development cooperation –and in overall development processes.

Section B. Reflection on MAG’s Response to the 2016 Progress Report Concept Note

The Monitoring Advisory Group (MAG) highlights the critical role the 2016 Progress Report can play in demonstrating GPEDC’s own value and in contributing to SDGs follow-up and review. On the first issue, given that a core objective of the report is to inform the High-Level Meeting in Nairobi (HLM 2), there is a need to use the report for both taking stock of progress in implementing the EDC principles to date *and* in adopting a forward-looking perspective in suggesting ways forward. The MAG suggests taking stock in two ways: (i) by providing a review of the effectiveness and impact on the implementation of the Busan EDC commitments to date; and (ii) by assessing the impact of EDC monitoring on country-level multi-stakeholder dialogue and strength of development partnerships. The MAG also underscores the critical importance of taking into account both political and policy-oriented dimensions, with space to identify progress bottlenecks, potential reasons for that, and including contextual elements in the interpretation of the data (global and country contexts). There is a suggestion to “think beyond the report itself”, producing policy-oriented or thematic materials based on the report and the monitoring data which could facilitate processing the findings by the broader stakeholder community and help inform the High-Level Meeting. In the context of positioning the GPEDC in relation to SDGs monitoring, the MAG recommended an element of forward-looking articulation as to how the GPEDC’s monitoring process may be strengthened to make it more relevant/aligned with the SDGs monitoring.

The JST welcomed the MAG recommendations on the 2016 Progress Report, and agrees with the need to have: (a) stronger policy and political economy dimensions, (b) supported by country-based/context-sensitive assessment of the results, (c) focusing on where progress is made and why progress is limited and relevant policy guidance on what needs to be done². To this end:

- The JST is compiling available relevant and complementary analysis undertaken by various institutions and initiatives, and will also explore the possibility of getting independent views on progress and challenges that can be introduced in the Report;
- The JST will expand the Concept Note for the 2016 Progress Report to outline specific areas of complementary analysis that might inform the global analysis;
- As suggested by the MAG, the JST will explore inclusion of a section or chapter that would highlight challenges more broadly with country examples – capturing views/perspectives of various constituencies, in addition to preparing various relevant policy briefs to inform the HLM 2 discussions;
- As part of the dissemination and publication of the report, JST will also explore partnering with some institutions to provide some key political message materials;

To further enrich the progress stock-taking in a complex cooperation landscape, the MAG recommended presentation of analysis in a way that demonstrates diversity of progress – also showcasing illustrative examples. Country profiles/briefs will provide more contextualized assessment of progress, while the Progress Report will also articulate varying degree of progress across regions and by providers.

With the view to strongly position the GPEDC in the SDGs implementation, the MAG’s recommendation on having a chapter/section that outlines forward-looking elements of the GPEDC monitoring is well noted. To support such a section, as recommended by the MAG, the report will benefit from a clear review of the effectiveness/impact to date and further articulation of the theory of change – focusing on the chain of changes that translate the principles into actions, and actions leading to development impact. To support this element, the JST will seek concrete country examples where the principles translated into actions and monitoring of

² The depth and breadth of the assessment should be consistent with a monitoring approach (vis-à-vis an in-depth evaluative approach). The resources and timing available for the preparation of the progress report are commensurate with a monitoring approach, and relying on existing complementary sources of evidence may have the only feasible option if the team is to meet the tight deadlines to influence the HLM-2 with monitoring findings.

effectiveness of development cooperation have had impacted the country-level development planning process and coordination frameworks.

JST reflection on key MAG recommendations

MAG: Specific areas of recommendation	JST Reflection and Proposed Actions
The indicator-focused chapters should demonstrate diversity of progress and context-specific factors affecting progress. Disaggregate as much as possible.	JST aims to achieve this by presentation of results at certain level of disaggregation (across regions, across various country context). Data will be disaggregated as much as possible.
The Monitoring process itself is to spark multi-stakeholder dialogue as a way to promote multi-stakeholder actions. To this end, the MAG recommends the importance of a paragraph or section that outline engagement of the multi-stakeholder actors in the monitoring process itself.	This element is very useful to signal how monitoring sparks in-country multi-stakeholder dialogue. To inform this, some specific country examples will need to be sourced. There is already a good example of monitoring process launched through multi-stakeholder processes and in-country coordination mechanisms supporting useful multi-stakeholder engagement in the monitoring. Such specific information will enrich this section.
MAG underscores the importance of having clear views on impacts to date and how they can be taken forward as one of the three key questions for the Progress Report to address.	The impacts of the monitoring in country process will be informed from articulation of the GPEDC theory of change, particularly through looking at some examples of country level institutional reforms/strengthening of partnerships. The JST will explore sourcing these information from country level, in addition to being informed from complementary analytical work undertaken by some of the institutions.
Reference point for the report to be the 2011 Busan commitments (not as a continuation of the Paris agenda).	Point well taken.
All GPEDC stakeholders should be considered key audience.	Point well taken.
Emphasize GPEDC monitoring unique contribution (focus on development cooperation, partner country led, inclusive approach)	Point well taken.
Consider how “bottlenecks” can be addressed.	To the extent possible, we will map existing approaches being tried out, and we will explore ways to bring stakeholders’ views on potential solutions to solve these bottlenecks (also to gain report ownership).
Specific advice on the report outline	Suggestions well taken. The tentative outline should/will be adjusted on the basis of the MAG discussions around the ToC and on how to best incentivize behavior change.
Prepare “collateral” shorter materials for better knowledge sharing and impact.	We plan to go beyond the report, which is central but not the only dissemination piece nor the most appropriate for every audience.

