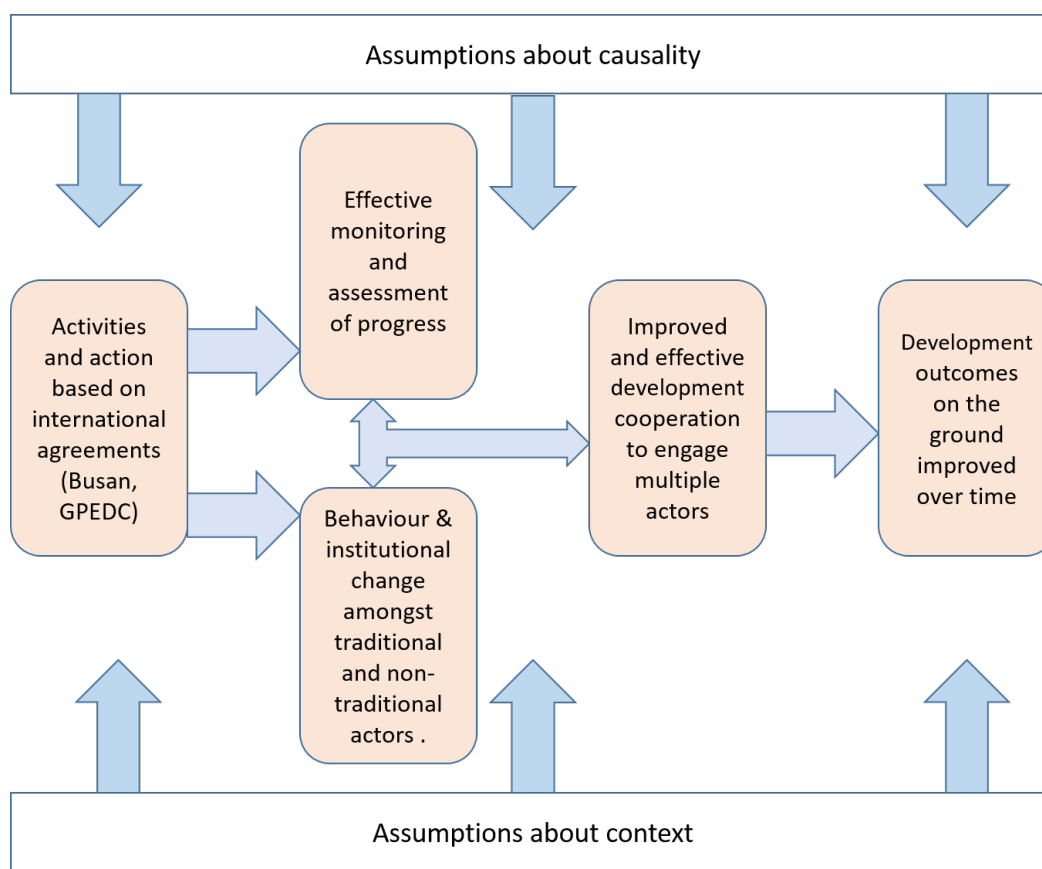


GPEDC Theory of Change: Issues for Discussion

Monitoring Advisory Group, February 2016

A. An Implied Theory of Change

The MAG has identified an implied theory of change (ToC), derived from the Busan/Mexico outcome documents, actions to encourage implementation (GPIs, Monitoring, etc.), and SC discussions on ways forward for the Global Partnership. More detail on the MAG's elaboration of this theory of change can be found in the Monitoring Group's "The GPEDC 'theory of change': An exposition and critique," December 2015.



The MAG endorses this theory of change as a plausible approach for realizing behavior change in development cooperation practices, institutional and policy reform, consistent with Busan commitments. But the MAG has also identified critical issues in implementing this theory of change in the current monitoring process and in the review of indicator methodologies.

The MAG will finalize in June a proposal for a GPEDC theory of change, which can contribute to the review of the GPEDC mandate, objectives and positioning regarding the 2030 agenda.

Given limited progress in several areas of Busan commitments, the MAG proposes a close Steering Committee examination of a number of issues affecting the implementation in practice of this theory of change. The following is a summary of issues and proposals from the MAG Discussion Paper, the JST response, and subsequent discussion at the MAG's February meeting in New York.

B. Context

Changing behavior in development cooperation is strongly influenced by the context in which these efforts have been initiated and implemented. The MAG notes the following issues that may affect the effective implementation of the GPEDC's implied theory of change:

1. Global Level:

- GPEDC as a political process As a multi-stakeholder, global, *voluntary* political process for changing behavior in development cooperation, the GPEDC is a unique but challenging space for considering and implementing a theory of change. Rooted in a complex global political process, the practicability and causality inherent in the implied theory of change have never been systematically tested. As noted below, actors are often impacted upon by other priorities and pressures, which may affect their willingness or ability to implement their commitments under the GPEDC.
- Leadership and drivers of change Sustaining and driving change requires strong leadership, with a concomitant investment of political capital and resources, on the part of all constituencies in the GPEDC. The MAG asked whether the process has lost momentum and global drivers of the ToC since Busan. The MAG noted the important role played by the partner country caucus in the lead-up to the Busan HLF in 2011. The Steering Committee may want to consider establishing a mechanism, similar to the partner country caucus, to ensure partner countries have their own space to meet and agree as a key GPEDC constituency.
- Synergies with the SDG/Agenda 2030. Situating the GPEDC within Agenda 2030 is crucial. The latter represents a fundamental shift in development finance in which effective development cooperation will continue to be crucial in achieving the Agenda. As a distinct monitoring process in its own right, the GPEDC Monitoring Framework complements the formal UN follow-up and review process on targets and indicators.

The GPEDC monitoring framework can contribute the following strengths to the SDGs:

- A unique inclusive platform for systematic gathering of evidence on development cooperation effectiveness, an area not covered by SDG indicators.
- Country-led monitoring building upon a decade of experience in monitoring how stakeholders engage in development cooperation (focusing on the quality of development partnerships).
- Implementing an inclusive approach in which all stakeholders contribute data and participate in data verification, directly enhancing multi-stakeholder dialogue at country, regional and global levels.

- A review to strengthen the GPEDC monitoring framework underway to improve indicator methodology and the framework (taking account two rounds of monitoring) and its fit for Agenda 2030.

2. Partner Countries / Providers of Development Cooperation Resources

The diversity of realities at the country and provider level create potential disconnects with the global discussion (High Level Fora and High Level Meetings) and commitments derived from these discussions. The MAG points to several areas of concern in this regard:

- Engaging the right actors and constituencies Do these global discussions fully engage all relevant actors at country/provider level in a meaningful way? Are representatives of different stakeholder constituencies reaching out fully? Are stakeholders knowledgeable and bound by the commitments made? Who is demanding change in development cooperation? Is the Global Partnership working with actors with political leverage to realize these demands?
- Multiple theories of change in play A very significant challenge for the GPEDC ToC is the reality that many other actors are involved at country/provider level that are acting on “competing” theories of change (ministerial priorities, domestic interests, etc). In implementing the GPEDC ToC, insufficient attention is given to the impacts of specific political economy realities for development and development cooperation, irrespective of seemingly shared commitments, norms and principles for effective development cooperation.
- Power dynamics unexamined Power dynamics at country/provider level are often unexamined conditions affecting change, with an implicit assumption in the GPEDC that all stakeholders want to see change happen and will work towards changes consistent with the four principles for effective development cooperation. Change may in fact be contested between and among stakeholders.
- Importance of institutional and policy reforms Insufficient attention on the part of Steering Committee members and stakeholders is given to the importance of institutional reform, revised policy and efforts to improve capacities, which in turn sustain behaviour change for different stakeholders at both partner country and provider headquarter level.
- Weak incentives to change There are few, if any, incentives to promote behaviour change in the monitoring process beyond the publishing and broad analysis of data. While 80 countries participating in the monitoring exercise is important, it is still mostly a technical and working level exercise, largely unrelated to creating political incentives at the highest level. Getting the indicators “technically right” is not the main issue. The critical issue is using the monitoring findings and generating

appetite at the highest level for mutual dialogue to incentivize behaviour change. Sharpening the structure of the Progress Report can support more effective use of findings.

- How do we assess progress? What has worked, and what has not worked, and why? The “why question” should be the focus for learning, particularly on how to address the barriers to change. It is insufficient just to identify examples of real progress consistent with the principles of effective development cooperation. The monitoring exercise needs to focus on why commitments are not being met and what the potential obstacles might be.

C. Actions and Recommendations

1. Theory of Change Based on feedback finalize a plausible theory of change for the GPEDC, clarifying assumptions and establishing links with the review of the GPEDC mandate and its relation to the implementation of Agenda 2030.
2. Testing practicality and usefulness of the monitoring framework In its review of the monitoring framework, the MAG is working with the JST to test the practicality and usefulness of the monitoring process and indicators through a survey of Round Two national coordinators and focal points, following the completion of this monitoring process. This survey will inform the final advice on the monitoring framework by the MAG in June.
3. Synergies with SDG review process The MAG strongly endorses the approach to the SDG review process and the key messages conveyed by the Co-Chairs in “The Contribution of the GPEDC Monitoring Framework to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Financing for Development,” October 2015.
4. Leadership and drivers of change More attention is needed to identify the drivers of change in development cooperation going forward, who may no longer be those who were responsible for the focus and ambition of the Busan agreement. The MAG urges partner countries, a key driver for change, to consider a partner country caucus in the preparations for the Nairobi HLM, with appropriate encouragement and support from the Co-Chairs, the Steering Committee and the JST.
5. Institutional drivers of change The MAG draws attention to the importance of institutional leadership within GPEDC stakeholder organizations to extend the reach of GPEDC within their organization/ministry, identifying an institutional vision and plan (an institutional “theory of change” relating to Busan/Mexico/Nairobi). It is also essential to engage actors more directly involved, as providers or as partner country entities, in carrying out programs in health, education, infrastructure etc., but who may otherwise be unaware of Busan commitments and follow-up.

6. Improving the monitoring framework and follow-up process to incentivize change The MAG suggests consideration of a number of areas to strengthen incentives and accountability:
- Strengthen inclusivity and dialogue Review the monitoring framework for ways that strengthen the inclusion of different development actors and stakeholders in the process of data gathering, analysis, validation and actual use of its findings. Consider a more holistic approach to monitoring that puts equal emphasis on creating conditions and mechanisms for sustained inclusive dialogue on effective development cooperation at the country and regional level.
 - Assure better balance in the monitoring framework The MAG strongly supports a country-led monitoring framework. However, it notes that the voluntary nature of this framework and its focus on data collection at the country level creates a potential imbalance among the stakeholders with respect to expected change in behaviour. The MAG's advice for a revised framework will propose changes that seek data and assessment of change not only at country level, but also at the level of providers' headquarters, and from CSOs and other development actors associated with GPEDC.
 - Addressing why change is not happening as expected The Steering Committee, with the support of the JST, should provide leadership in creating "safe spaces" to discuss the "why question" – identifying not only the barriers to behaviour change, but also engaging the right people across their own organisations (drivers of change) and identifying incentives for institutional and political drivers to overcome these barriers in implementing the principles for effective development cooperation. Addressing these barriers is essential if the GPEDC is to close the gap between the indicator framework as an exercise, and how it can be used to promote real change in behaviours and practices.
 - Improve the Progress Report as a resource for dialogue In addition to a global synthesis, provide the necessary resources to produce country and provider profiles, with access to more detailed data online, to enable country dialogue on outstanding issues raised in the monitoring exercise. Draw attention in the Progress Report not only to positive cases of change, but to the conditions that made change possible, and to continued barriers to change in the areas under review.
 - Improving the incentives for change arising from the monitoring process by drawing attention to differential performance. Consider a range of options for drawing attention to the differing performance of individual development cooperation actors in realizing the principles and commitments of Busan. While ranking country performance may be difficult for many areas of the monitoring framework, the MAG noted the positive incentive of ranking aid providers by Publish What You Fund in the case of improved reporting to IATI. Other options could include more generic indicators of progress for all stakeholders (green, amber, red lights), or an awards system, or independent commentaries on performance.