

Monitoring Advisory Group Response to the 2016 Progress Report Concept Note (revised, 16 September 2015)

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December 2015

The Monitoring Advisory Group (MAG) has been requested to review and provide commentary on the Concept Note for the 2016 Progress Report. The following consolidates responses expressed by MAG members. Comments are organised according to the proposed sections of the report.

Summary

- Whilst the core of the Progress Report must continue to focus on the indicators as grouped by the JST, the MAG believes the second report needs to be a very different document than the first. This is not fully reflected in the current proposed structure.
- A core objective of the report is to inform HLM2. With this purpose in mind, the report should not only inform stakeholders about progress in the Busan commitments, but also be forward-looking, positioning the GPEDC in relation to SDG monitoring, along the lines set out in the October 2015 Co-Chairs statement on the contribution of the monitoring framework to the 2030 Agenda. The report may benefit, therefore, from an additional section and/or sub-sections in the first and last chapters that looks forward to how GPEDC's monitoring exercise may change to make it more relevant/aligned with SDG monitoring, drawing on the recommendations of the MAG for a renewed framework. The absence of a 'What happens next' section makes these additions particularly relevant given that many believe the current GPEDC indicators have a deadline of 2015.
- Similarly, coming after two rounds of country focused monitoring and the endpoint for some Busan commitments to 2015 (#4 and #5b), the report would benefit from a clear review of the effectiveness/impact to date on the implementation of Busan commitments and how they can be taken forward. This links to the theme of the final chapter but should also be highlighted in the opening chapter, which is the one that will be most read.
- The emphasis on presenting data disaggregated at the country level is welcomed as a substantial improvement to the report as this is where progress will be most visible, relevant, and useful to country-level actors.
 - The concept note suggests that this detail will be presented in the annex country tables. Detail on disaggregated performance should not be limited to these annex pages and the JST should consider ways of presenting analysis beyond global aggregates throughout the report, demonstrating diversity of progress and promoting success. This should particularly be attempted in the individual indicator chapters, where specific examples of progress (and lack of) can be referred to, analysed and lessons drawn for wider dissemination.
 - The country pages data should be complemented by policy and political context, in particular changes experienced, and how this context has affected country results. It is in demonstrating that sometimes-challenging political economy constraints can be addressed that the process can potentially have its most significant impact. Modest improvements may represent significant gains in certain contexts and these should be celebrated alongside maintaining the report's role to provoke and push for further progress. The MAG believes this is important to the potential for change and the strategies for making progress. Members have proposed different ways to achieve this goal. Countries could be encouraged to draft such contextual summaries themselves (specifying specific word limits e.g. 200-300 words) to encourage ownership of the report. However, there is concern that this may not

allow stakeholders an equal voice. An alternative may be a section or chapter that highlights challenges more broadly with agreed country examples.

- Pages or short sections authored by specific constituencies may also be useful, such as CSOs and the private sector, to discuss best practice beyond the indicators relevant to them and their perspective on the future of the monitoring process. This approach would add a multi-stakeholder character to the Report and address some of the likely limitations of the process, which may well be not only led by governments, but dominated by them in some countries.
- The report is grounded in a technical exercise and this objective presentation of the findings is central. However, political dimensions may be critical to ensure legitimacy of the findings. A number of indicators (e.g. some of those drawn from previous Paris indicators) may well continue to demonstrate limited progress. Reporting this will not be sufficient. If these indicators are to remain relevant this needs to be accompanied by analysis of why progress is limited and what can be done to address it. . This is a political discussion, not a technocratic exercise. We welcome the concluding section of each chapter that considers policy guidance on what needs to be done. However, often it is known what needs to be done. Rather, there also needs to be commentary on *why* this is not being done. Should this be considered politically challenging for the JST to author then externally authored expert boxes or sections may avoid the need for multi-stakeholder signoff, as the DAC annual report has done. JST would need to retain editorial control.
- Related to the above, there is broad agreement among the MAG that monitoring itself has limited impact if it does not relate to processes of engagement of stakeholders. A section in the opening chapter should therefore also address the changes in the process for undertaking round two. How did the focal points work? To what degree was there multi-stakeholder dialogue in the validation or data collection? This will require quick reflection on the process.
- The annex positions the report as a “continuation” of previous Paris Monitoring Surveys. Such positioning is unhelpful and should not be emphasised in 2016 material if the GPEDC is trying to secure wider buy-in for the future, particularly to stakeholders who are not aligned to the OECD. While there needs to be some acknowledgement of history of the process - adding to its legitimacy in the context of its continued monitoring of development cooperation in support of SDG implementation - this should not be the frame of reference. Progress should be seen in terms of the 2011 Busan outcome and commitments. It is also essential to recall that part of Busan was the acknowledgement that Paris commitments were not fully met and continue to be seen by developing countries as a core part of the post Busan agenda. Five of the indicators are revised Paris indicators.
- The report should be seen as part of a wider accountability, learning and policy dialogue strategy for the GPEDC and in relation to other parallel and supportive processes. Key messages materials will be essential for communication and dialogue at the global level, and accessible country pages will be essential resources for continued country dialogue where these are possible. Therefore it would be helpful to consider at the same time what supporting collateral will be produced (many won't read a large report) and what engagement opportunities will be available to discuss its findings. This material was rather limited at Mexico. Such material and engagement also need to be incorporated into the timeline.
- The lessons learnt section of the concept note, perhaps appropriately, glosses over the high-level politicking by a limited number of donors that resulted in delays faced in the first monitoring report. Whilst this may be largely unavoidable, one suggestion might be for the SC to have a discussion in March about the “rules of the game” for taking on board this

commentary – such as focusing mainly on objective factual issues, with policy recommendations developed by the JST and Co-Chairs which can be discussed by all stakeholders in Nairobi.

Review by section

1. Purpose of the report:

- The report needs to not only track progress, as highlighted in the purpose, but also identify where progress has been limited in order to prioritise action.
- An additional purpose: Highlight the GPEDC monitoring of the effectiveness of development cooperation as a distinct monitoring process in its own right, which complements the formal UN review process in targets for Agenda 2030 in relation to the means of implementation to achieve the SDGs.
- This approach may help the report to be a more useful tool for each country as well as for groups of stakeholders facing similar challenges to come together to creatively think of new approaches to areas where progress is slow.

2. Audience:

- The MAG believes it is very unhelpful for a Partnership to make part of the stakeholders secondary audiences. The interests of the particular audience may differ, but all stakeholders in the GPEDC are interested in the outcomes of the monitoring and the recommendations of the Progress Report, particularly if we hope that it will generate further multi-stakeholder dialogue at country level.
- It is important to include regional platforms as part of the audience, especially because they set priorities at the regional level and development cooperation is being assigned to help meet these priorities and goals.
- An intended audience for the 2014 report was also finance ministers attending the HLM but the report format did not lend itself to be consumed by this audience.
- Those attending the HLM may also be added as primary audience.
- The 'interested public' are not a significant audience and can be deleted.

3. Context:

- The context does not mention other reports on development cooperation such as the DCF report on mutual accountability. A section of the concept note would benefit from a brief scan in defining the unique contribution of the GPEDC report in relation to others. It is particularly important to highlight the unique value of the GPEDC monitoring framework (e.g. focus on development cooperation, partner country led, inclusive approach).
- Identifying gaps in progress to meeting commitments - as detailed in the concept note - is not sufficient for a second report. It needs to explore why progress isn't happening. The JST may not be well positioned in relation to the SC and the GPEDC stakeholders to author such an analysis themselves given sign-off processes. Thus authored commentary from respected analysts may be one pragmatic solution.
- More will need to be done at the 2016 HLM to present the results and have a dialogue. This was missing in Mexico. One suggestion is info-graphics that reflect the results, which can be disseminated through twitter and other social media, and foster exchange among different stakeholders.
- As emphasised in the concept note, it will also be critical for the report to be released sufficiently far in advance of the HLM to allow sufficient time to review before attending.

- While the Note suggests, “the findings are ultimately used to inform policy dialogue at country, regional and global levels,” there is no indication in the Note that data will be presented comparing results by regions.

4. Main questions:

Q1: "Has there been any behaviour change on how stakeholders engage in development co-operation?"

- 'Stakeholders' is very broad category, including providers, recipients of development cooperation and other development actors. The concept note and report should be clearer on the distinctions between these very different actors and explicitly consider source, location and drivers of behavioural change. For example, where does the explanation of the lack of use of country systems lie? For the indicators that list progress at the recipient country level it isn't always clear. This is an important distinction to make throughout – from the overarching questions to the details of progress against the country level indicators: Has there been behaviour change among the relevant stakeholders in relation to key commitments made in Busan to reform development cooperation practice?

Q2 "What are the main areas of progress and bottlenecks encountered by development stakeholders at country level?"

- This question also needs to consider how bottlenecks can be addressed. As GPEDC seeks to demonstrate its role in implementing the SDGs it needs to find opportunities to present how it can help countries and providers of development cooperation overcome bottlenecks.

A third question could also be considered: What impact have the commitments made to date and, more importantly, how can we build on these in the SDG era?

5. Main messages and answers to the question:

"Tracking progress stimulates mutual accountability and multi-stakeholder dialogue at country, regional and global levels on how to improve the effectiveness of development co-operation."

- This main message stated by the concept note is an assumption of the framework and could now be questioned. Therefore it can be posed as a question *"Has tracking progress stimulated mutual accountability and multi-stakeholder dialogue at country, regional and global levels on how to improve the effectiveness of development co-operation. If so, in what ways?"*
- We are still to find out whether indeed there has been more multi-stakeholder dialogue at the country level among stakeholders as a result of tracking progress in round two. Bringing together evidence in the report on the process will be essential. The report can question this theory of change and consider unintended consequences of progress tracking (such as blame shifting).

6. Tentative outline:

Executive Summary

- Many senior officials who are a key audience will look for an Executive Summary. Tables and charts in this summary could outline the 10 indicators, targets and overall status or result for each indicator at the global level.

Chapter 1

- The first chapter must address broader and forward looking issues in the current context, which will also be central issues for the Nairobi HLM, namely the future of the monitoring

framework including MAG recommendations (see our points raised in the Summary). In this regard, the Report can take as a reference point the very good paper prepared by the JST and Co-Chairs for the October meeting of the UN on SDG indicators, which situates the unique contribution that the GPEDC monitoring framework can contribute to this broader process going forward.

- What period will this cover? Will it cover the last few rounds of monitoring or the most recent one? It will be helpful to compare with past results also to capture both recent and longer trends.

Chapter 2

- The report should go further this time and look at individual country examples to draw out success case studies exploring what has changed and why. This point is well emphasised in the Editorial note. Reporting findings without analysis has limited utility, particularly as this is the second monitoring report. Such case studies must be grounded in local realities and constructed in such a way as to provide the basis for genuine learning and experience sharing. They should not be seen uniquely as promotional opportunities.

Chapter 5

- Reflecting on, and assessing the effectiveness of the targets set for 2015 should be a key aspect of this year's report and this should be reflected in the chapter title. The content under this chapter does not seem to include 'next steps' which is an omission. Is this because next steps will not be defined until the HLM? If so, the report might still suggest options.

7. Annexes, process & learning:

- It is good that the annexes will comprise of country pages. However, this should not be limited to data and indicators only. Some context narrative and qualitative information will be valuable in situating the data, to be presented in the annexes or other parts of the report. Countries themselves could draft a short narrative (200-300 words) that gives them voice and ownership of the report. Should securing agreement among country stakeholders be considered problematic then key themes could be incorporated in the main body of the report with agreed case study contextualisation, leaving the annex to deliver as much detail as feasible.
- On "Editorial": Specific policy guidance should not repeat the usual recommendations on development effectiveness. Rather, they should reflect on analysis presented in the chapter that seeks to explain the current status of progress. Guidance should, therefore, focus on addressing bottlenecks and as much as possible focus on the reasons why progress has been limited in identified cases. The concept note does not indicate who will draft policy recommendations, although some reference is made to the MAG to provide advice on underlying methodology of the monitoring framework and on the formulation of policy recommendations. Such recommendations would ideally draw on substantial input from members if this does not disrupt the timeliness of the process.
- On "Actors": The section does not clarify whether the MAG will be responsible for drafting components of the report as well as providing advice. Additionally, there is no reference to an external peer review process either here or in the timeline. We assume peer review will happen but time will be a challenge, and so clarification will be helpful, together with who will be involved in such review (the MAG, for example).
- Annex B. Background. This annex positions the report as a "continuation" of previous Paris Monitoring Surveys. Such positioning is extremely unhelpful and should not be emphasised in 2016 material if the GPEDC is trying to secure wider buy-in, particularly from Southern

partners who may look more to the UN and do not wish to align to an OECD/DAC heritage. While there needs to be some acknowledgement of history of the process - adding to its legitimacy in the context of its continued monitoring of development cooperation in support of SDG implementation - this should not be the frame of reference. Progress should be seen in terms of the 2011 Busan outcome and commitments, whilst acknowledging that part of Busan was the acknowledgement that Paris commitments were not fully met and continued to be seen by developing countries as a core part of the post Busan agenda.

- Lesson learning: There is no mention of need for additional material to digest findings beyond the main, substantive report. Lessons from the previous report suggest these are necessary to consolidate key findings and messages to a majority audience who will not read the whole report. Similarly, the timeline does not take into consideration requirements to produce additional materials. Messaging for such products requires careful consideration and should be factored in accordingly.
- Measuring impact: It would be helpful for the MAG to know if such impact analysis was done for the previous report and what the findings were.