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Informal Exchange

Towards a shared understanding of effective development co-operation: Learning from different actors and approaches

24 November 2017, OECD Conference Centre Paris

Background

This note summarises key takeaways of an [exchange](#) among researchers and practitioners about the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC). The exchange was jointly organised by the OECD Joint Support Team to the GPEDC, the GPEDC Co-Chair Germany (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development - BMZ) and the [German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik \(DIE\)](#).

The 60 participants included OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) delegates, civil society organisations, several researchers from Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, United Kingdom and Germany and the OECD Secretariat. The purpose of the meeting was to continue an ongoing exchange¹ of views of researchers on the global development cooperation architecture and inform the work of the GPEDC. Researchers from emerging economies presented independent research findings and discussed with participants on critical themes, such as development effectiveness and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Key Conclusions and Actions Arising

1. **Regular informal exchanges** between researchers, governments, and civil society organisations are a useful way to share knowledge and promote mutual learning on development effectiveness issues. Such exchanges should be continued, and involve Least Developed Countries.
2. Emerging economies have a long history in development co-operation. Ahead of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action anniversary (BAPA+40) in 2019, Southern partners can be expected to advance on **norms and standards** that reflect the heterogeneity of the South, while taking account of the changed global context. An open discussion about the effectiveness of cooperation between the different actors (North- South, South- South, Triangular partners; recipient countries, etc) could increase development benefits for recipient countries.
3. Identifying **issues of common interest on development effectiveness could encourage inclusive policy dialogue at the Global Partnership** with Southern partners, OECD DAC members, LDCs and other stakeholders. This will be useful to build trust, promote greater mutual understanding and encourage learning from each other's innovative approaches and solutions. The recognition of incompatible interests around such issues should be embraced. Issue areas would need to be identified collaboratively and could include e.g. technical co-operation, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of development co-operation, private sector engagement, innovation, infrastructure development etc.
4. The Global Partnership can serve as platform to **discuss specific initiatives by Southern partners**.
5. The **contribution of the Global Partnership to the SDG and FfD follow-up** and its complementarity with the DCF must be better understood and amplified at the political level.
6. Participants suggest to set up a **working group with emerging powers** for regular exchange and to strengthen collaboration and ownership and to invite Southern partners to **technical working groups** of the GPEDC on issue-specific themes.

¹ Past DIE events on the GPEDC and the global development architecture were held in [Berlin 2017](#), [Johannesburg 2017](#), [Nairobi 2016](#), [New York 2016](#) and [Mexico City 2014](#)



Summary

Opening Session

The **DAC Vice Chair Marit Van Zomeren** opened the meeting and stressed the high priority of development effectiveness on the DAC agenda and the priority to engage with representatives of emerging economies. **Dorothea Groth (BMZ)** highlighted the importance of GPEDC's multi-stakeholder approach to implement the SDGs and also emphasized the significance of emerging economies in this regard. She argued that the GPEDC is about the "how" of development cooperation. Current priorities are the integration of the GPEDC into the 2030 Agenda and the definition of the GPEDC's multi-stakeholder approach, and the implementation of the [GPEDC work programme](#).

Stephan Klingebiel (DIE) emphasised the changing dynamics of the global development cooperation landscape. In his understanding, the term "development cooperation" includes Official Development Assistance (ODA) as defined by the OECD DAC as well as South-South Cooperation (SSC). He pointed out that there is still no universally accepted global platform for development cooperation providing norms and standards. The DIE papers by researchers from emerging economies address this topic and provide ideas on how to move forward. For the discussion he proposed three guiding questions: 1) Do we need a global platform that is accepted by all and provides norms and standards for development cooperation?; 2) If yes, can the GPEDC be such a platform, or does it need to change?; 3) What initiatives or dialogue formats can contribute to a debate on development effectiveness for achieving the 2030 Agenda?

Session 1: Effective Development Co-operation for the 2030 Agenda: Enhancing Shared Understanding on Challenges and Opportunities

The moderator **Chantal Verger (DCD/GPP)** emphasised that the SDGs provide a new opportunity for emerging economies and the GPEDC to cooperate. However, engagement with Southern providers has been difficult, not just in the GPEDC but also in other forums, such as the DCF. There is a genuine interest to learn from Southern partners. Existing engagement across the GPEDC Work Programme and the Global Partnership Initiatives should be further intensified.

Gerardo Bracho (Formerly Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research)² presented his paper on "[The Troubled Relationship of the Emerging Powers and the Effective Development Cooperation Agenda](#)". In the paper, he explains the history of why emerging powers, the BICS (Brazil, India and China), left the GPEDC and how they might re-join. He identifies four main causes of the lacking engagement: 1) The GPEDC is seen as a restricted OECD-driven forum; 2) The GPEDC narrative is perceived as impinging on UN agendas; 3) The GPEDC is understood as a vehicle of the "Western" narrative; 4) Identity politics (calling oneself a recipient or donor). He further elaborated on the issue of "identity politics" around the time of the Busan High-level Meeting in 2011. "Burden sharing" was the most contested issue and three different positions were presented on how the emerging powers could join the GPEDC: 1) As donors with similar responsibilities that are monitored similar to "traditional DAC donors"; 2) As SSC partners with no responsibilities and voluntary commitments; 3) As "Southern providers" with tailor-made "differential commitments".

At the Busan meeting, most OECD-DAC donors favoured option 1, China and India favoured option 2, and Brazil, Mexico and Korea backed option 3. Although option 3 was adopted, it was watered down by article 2 of the Busan document to get China and India in. This "Korean deal" eased the way by exempting the Southern providers of being monitored until they specified their own "**differential commitments**", but these were never defined by Southern providers and the weak alliance that had supported the third option eventually disbanded. In Mexico City in 2012, these discussions were already mostly forgotten and the BICs did not rejoin. Based on this assessment, Gerardo Bracho recommended supporting the objective of the present GPEDC team, to

² All researchers spoke in their personal capacity and not on behalf of their governments.



strengthen the monitoring framework and to bring back the BICs by recreating a space for the Southern providers in the narrative, the governance of the GPEDC and in the monitoring framework. A guiding formula for this process could be “**self-differentiation and voluntary commitments**”, which the Paris Climate Change Agreement has successfully promoted.

Li Xiaoyun (China Agricultural University) presented his paper on “[Should China join the GPEDC? The prospects for China and the GPEDC](#)”. According to Prof. Li, the UN-DCF is the legitimate place to discuss development co-operation issues that should be strengthened. While he agreed that the GPEDC work programme addresses relevant issues in the changing landscape of development cooperation (e.g. the need to include SSC, the role of the private sector and CSOs), the programme still represents mostly the interests of the DAC. According to him, the work programme was the continuation of the DAC strategy to secure the “survival of the DAC” in a changing global context that requires “buy in” from emerging donors. More specifically, the work programme is based on rules, regulations and ethics set by OECD-DAC donors, which do not meet the political interest of China. Relevant topics for China, such as the “One Belt One Road” initiative or infrastructure financing, could be addressed in the future.

Moreover, he argued that not many people in China know about the GPEDC. To achieve greater convergence between the GPEDC and China, it would be necessary to establish close contact among the think tanks in the member countries of the DAC and in China first. He considered it necessary to build bridges and proposed, in case the GPEDC considers the emerging powers to be important, that there should be an **emerging powers working group** to have a dialogue on a regular basis, in order to build up ownership of the development effectiveness agenda. He concluded that if China and India are not part of the GPEDC, then it cannot consider itself a “Global Partnership” but only a “DAC Global Partnership”.

Paulo Esteves (BRICS Policy Center, Brazil) outlined three points raised by the presenters that could be addressed by the GPEDC. First, top-down approaches do no longer help to address global problems and more bottom-up approaches are needed. Second, the GPEDC reflects a polycentric order that aimed to socialize emerging powers. Yet, **China was not being socialized by “the West” but instead the West was introduced to Chinese practices**. Third, the achievement of the GPEDC was to reshape the understanding of international responsibilities and in establishing a true multi-stakeholder platform, which is an important initiative. Paulo Esteves argued in favour of a platform for norms and standard setting because “otherwise nobody will feel responsible” and “we will end up with no actions”. For him, the division of labour between GPEDC and the UN is clear, with the UN dealing with the overarching review of the 2030 Agenda and the GPEDC focusing on specific issues in development cooperation. As a step forward, he suggested that issue-specific working groups invite emerging powers, for example on topics such as private sector engagement, knowledge sharing, or technology.

Emma Mawdsley (Cambridge University) quoted research by Chantal Mouffe to illustrate that the last 15-20 years have been dominated by consensus politics and the aim to align diverging interests. She argued that it is necessary to recognize a more antagonistic politics instead, namely a **politics of difference**, embracing the recognition of incompatible interests, also in the context of development cooperation. She reminded that aid has historically been a tool of “Western statecraft” and that this cannot be left unconsidered, but also that the Southern partners need to recognize that SSC contains antagonistic politics.

In the discussion, several issues were raised, including the influence of Chinese ambitions in international relations, concrete proposals for creating more dialogue between GPEDC and emerging economies and the future of the OECD DAC in this regard. Most importantly, participants noted that debates on the engagement of emerging economies and the GPEDC should also feature **the voices of the least developed countries**, as they are most impacted by changing norms and standards of development cooperation. Finally, a number of participants pointed out that China and other emerging economies were already participating in several work areas of the OECD, apart from development cooperation.



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Session 2: Joining forces to achieve the 2030 Agenda – Inclusive Dialogue and Knowledge Exchange with Southern Partners

Ender Saritekin (Permanent Delegation of Turkey to the OECD) moderated this session, which focused on concrete examples of dialogue and knowledge exchange. The moderator highlighted a common concern for impact and cost effectiveness of development co-operation, to be felt by people on the ground and to ensure that no one is left behind.

Sachin Chaturvedi (Research and Information System for Developing Countries, India) presented his draft study on “Inclusive dialogue and knowledge exchange: exploring strength of cooperation across modalities”. Taking the universal commitment to the SDGs as a starting point, he argued that countries like India already agreed to “share the burden” and accepted its responsibilities, for instance, when it committed to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. He also listed various Indian bilateral cooperation projects, for example the Solar Alliance with France. In his view, it is not necessary to have just one platform for common standards to implement the SDGs, as the SDGs can be discussed across many platforms.

Moreover, India is not joining the GPEDC because India has its own approach to development cooperation, the “**new development compact**”. According to the compact, developing countries need economic growth and therefore do not need processes like the GPEDC. Moreover, Sachin Chaturvedi criticized that most donors continue to think in silos, as is also reflected by the indicators of GPEDC’s monitoring framework. Although he did not rule out the possibility of working together in future, he argued that it is not necessary to have a common framework on norms. To implement the SDGs, an enabling environment is most important, but the SDGs also acknowledge that every country should implement the SDGs according to its contexts. Using the metaphor of “a thousand flowers” representing various international platforms, he argued that “If these flowers do not blossom, why should it help to make them uniform and demand that they are of the same colour?”

Deb Bhattacharya (Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh) presented his draft study on the “Future of the GPEDC Monitoring Framework: To Sink or Sail?”. In his study, he argues that it is important to understand the GPEDC not as a static institution, but to consider its evolution. He described the **monitoring framework as the “crown jewel”** of the GPEDC as it is an instrument for SDG follow-up and review and strives for accountability on a global level, but he questioned whether the framework in its current form is serving this purpose. In a SWOT analysis Deb Bhattacharya considered the strengths of GPEDC to be: including a diverse range of stakeholders, instilling a degree of mutual accountability, providing empirical material for evidence-based dialogue, and encouraging common metrics and standards. The weaknesses were: GPEDC is perceived as being largely shaped by an OECD-DAC led process, lack of political legitimacy (limited engagement of the private sector, NGOs, and private philanthropy), ambiguity in regard to GPEDC engagement with other international processes and the absence of follow-up commitments.

As opportunities, Deb Bhattacharya mentioned that the GPEDC is well positioned to make contributions to the 2030 Agenda. The GPEDC could substantially **contribute to the follow-up and review process of SDGs** and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Threats were, however, that enthusiasm is not shared equally among OECD-DAC countries. The absence of China and India had further relaxed the pressure on traditional aid providers to stick to commitments and the monitoring exercise seems to be unable to link-up with other global development practices.

Against this backdrop, he asked how the GPEDC can be made fit for purpose and **sketched three different scenarios**. First, the GPEDC continues business-as-usual to implement its endorsed work programme while other (e.g. Southern providers) and other processes (e.g. SDGs follow-up and review) proceed in parallel. Second, the GPEDC expands the scope and scale of the monitoring framework but this “aspirational” scenario appears to be politically unfeasible. Third, the GPEDC moves towards a “new platform”, with both the OECD



members and the Southern providers, along with other relevant actors. Different processes and instruments could then find space in a comfortable co-existence and that platform will enjoy greater legitimacy, if housed within the UN system (with structured technical and political support from OECD and Southern providers).

Wu Jin (China Agricultural University) argued that SSC is demand-driven and similar to the presenters she emphasised that the diversity in contents of SSC and ODA need to be reflected in the monitoring and evaluation system of the GPEDC. She also highlighted that it was difficult for different countries to apply the GPEDC monitoring framework because they do not have the data required. **Andi Hakim (State Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia)** underlined that from the perspective of Indonesia a dialogue on sustainable development is very important. However, the issues of religion and ethnicity and actors promoting these topics were often underrepresented.

In the discussion, several additional points were raised, such as the efforts of the Network of Southern Think Tanks (NeST) to create a monitoring framework for SSC, the need to ensure that development cooperation achieves “value for money”, the increased blurring of recipient and provider roles and accountability of development cooperation. Most participants agreed that **developing an analytical framework that adequately reflects the principles in SSC**, and includes lessons from the OECD-DAC, was worthwhile but required more work on indicators and data collection. One participant also stressed that norms and standards are needed for all actors to hold them accountable and to foster transparency.

Concluding Session

Dorothea Groth summarised the discussions and highlighted key issues. First, more work is needed on defining the “institutional home” of development effectiveness discussions. While the GPEDC clearly positioned itself as contributing to the SDGs at its second High-Level Meeting in 2016 in Nairobi and has contributed to UN processes on the working level since, more work is needed to communicate these contributions more clearly and to elevate them to a political level. Second, on implementing norms and standards, Ms. Groth stressed the need for OECD-DAC donors to continue their work towards implementing the Busan principles. Going forward, she sees the need to balance these continued efforts of OECD-DAC donors with a more **open approach to self-differential commitments from emerging economies**. She closed by highlighting that the GPEDC should indeed be an open multi-stakeholder partnership that gives voice to partners from the South to speak up, especially in terms of choosing substantive topics of interest to Southern providers. As a next step, she proposed that an issue-based and gradual approach might be most feasible.

Thomas Fues (DIE) focused on four points in his concluding comment. First, he reiterated the issue of “identity politics” of “Southern powers”. Although Southern providers might have been engaged in the OECD on domestic policy issues before, development cooperation with other countries is a more complicated issue. Most Southern providers are not ready to call themselves “donors”. Second, in regard to divergence and convergence he argued that convergence is already visible in the norms and standards adopted in the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, it would be important to appreciate diversity, as mentioned by Emma Mawdsley. Third, Thomas Fues emphasized that development cooperation should “go through the UN”, particularly the High-level Political Forum. He did not see a future for the GPEDC the way it is set up at the moment. The discussions showed that **Southern providers are not going to join as it stands today**. The GPEDC needed a stronger link to the UN, for instance in the form of a mandate by the UN Economic and Social Council. Fourth, the OECD-DAC would remain important to report on the activities of the OECD-DAC donors and it is the institution that partner countries can call on for greater transparency and accountability around DAC donors’ development co-operation. The OECD-DAC may be able, however, to provide important recommendations to the GPEDC on how their standards can be moved to a different context.

In the discussion, several important issues were raised, including the need to move the GPEDC closer to the 2030 Agenda, the need to create a common language on development effectiveness topics (private sector engagement, monitoring and evaluation, innovation, technical co-operation, capacity building, infrastructure



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development etc.), preserving the multi-stakeholder character of the GPEDC and its complementarity to state-centric UN discussions, and the key role of China for the development effectiveness debate. Participants warned that it **would not make sense to give up the GPEDC without having an alternative**. One participant stressed that in any case Southern providers need to agree on some standards and norms before they can sign up to self-differentiated and voluntary commitments. Ahead of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action anniversary (BAPA+40), new norms and standards that reflect the heterogeneity of the South while taking account of the changed global context were needed. Another participant stated that the GPEDC was “fighting a war against time” when considering the changing landscape in development cooperation. The next High-level meeting would be a window of opportunity to decide the fate of GPEDC monitoring and the future of the GPEDC as such. Further discussions about this core issue should take place in settings like this, in dialogues between researchers and policy makers, while also including more “views from the ground”.

Stephan Klingebiel listed four takeaways. First, on the norms and standards he argued we should start thinking about “global cooperation in support of the SDGs” conceptually and one task for researchers would be to define convergence in this context. Second, he stressed that opinions on the future of GPEDC have been diverging for years and there is a need to move beyond this “pending situation”. Third, from his point of view, the aid and development effectiveness agenda is still crucial for partner countries and will be important to revive the momentum of this debate (especially through the OECD-DAC and GPEDC). Fourth, he acknowledged the helpful role of friends from the “Global South” in this debate and that there is a need to better understand of the approaches, norms and standards that matter for “the South”, which in itself is a highly heterogeneous group.

The **DAC Vice Chair Marit Van Zomeren** concluded the meeting by highlighting the importance of building trust between Southern partners and OECD DAC members, recognising not only areas of common interest, but also genuine differences. She outlined the broad agreement on the need to further reflect on how the GPEDC can complement and serve the UN system in bringing together efforts to reach the 2030 Agenda, noting that the Global Partnership can play a big part in both technical and political dialogue. Ms Van Zomeren stressed the need for practical formats to pursue substantive discussions on development effectiveness that help to strengthen relations with emerging economies, the importance for the GPEDC to host discussions on norms and standards of development cooperation and to give partner countries a voice in development cooperation.