
Session Note

Session 1: The relevance of development effectiveness narratives in achieving the SDGs in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic

Ten years ago, the Busan Partnership Agreement signalled a significant change in narrative, moving from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness and from a donor-recipient paradigm to a multi-stakeholder partnership which recognises all development actors including governments, civil society organisations, the business sector, parliamentarians, trade unionists and foundations.

The adoption of Agenda 2030 resulted in a further evolution of the effectiveness narrative with GPEDC seeking to re-position itself as the “how” required to deliver on the “what” set out in the Sustainable Development Goals. This narrative has continued to evolve, for example through the adoption of the Kampala Principles which provide strategic and programmatic guidance on how to better partner with the private sector at country level in implementing programmes and projects that benefit from public resources, with a focus on increased impact.

To remain relevant to the challenges and dilemmas of the current context, narratives on development effectiveness must continue to evolve. Before the pandemic, it was already clear that poverty was increasingly concentrated in fragile contexts, that rising inequality posed a significant challenge to operationalising the Leave No One Behind agenda and that the climate emergency was disproportionately affecting those with least resilience to its impacts. COVID-19 has exacerbated these challenges, reversed years of progress on development and put key SDG targets at risk.

Pre-COVID, development cooperation was already a small and declining proportion of the overall resources available for development, and it has itself been affected by the pandemic. While some donors increased their funding in response to the crisis, others significantly reduced their contributions as a result of pressure on domestic budgets, and the future outlook remains uncertain.

Against a backdrop of falling domestic revenues, reductions in foreign direct investment, a loss of income from tourism, rising debt burdens and a significant fall in remittances, well-targeted development cooperation can play a vital counter-cyclical role in some of the poorest countries, who have been hit hardest by the consequences of COVID-19, and for whom recovery will be slow.

The current context presents challenges to development actors in applying the effectiveness principles meaningfully in order to change behaviour, build shared agendas and generate action at all levels that help address key political priorities. Greater investment in fragile settings poses dilemmas with regard to the use of country systems and alignment; more diverse actors and complex accountability relationships and difficulties around participatory approaches make it more challenging to develop and maintain inclusive partnerships; and pressure to deliver quick results may be at odds with long-term, local capacity building efforts. There are also

broader tensions around development versus other foreign policy objectives and on how to ensure whole-of-government coordination within provider and partner countries.

A Statement released by the GPEDC Co-Chairs in May 2020 has already highlighted the continuing relevance of effectiveness principles in the context of COVID-19, making the case for the most effective use of all resources available to counter the expected increase of poverty levels and growing economic and social inequalities.

A modernised development effectiveness narrative can help stakeholders adapt to the new context and address specific effectiveness challenges, and articulating that challenge is more important than ever during COVID-19. An updated narrative can guide partners in complex settings and help address dilemmas and tensions to deliver better together. It can also respond to the urgent political challenges of rising poverty and inequality, the impact of climate change, COVID-19 response and recovery and increased conflict and security concerns. A new narrative is also key to re-energising governments and other stakeholders, and the Effectiveness Summit in 2022 provides an opportunity to launch a modernised shared vision and narrative.

Session 2: Innovative and inclusive partnerships

How can new, inclusive and effective partnerships developed under COVID-19 be promoted and taken to scale?

Inclusive partnerships are both a key principle of effective development co-operation and the basis of the Global Partnership's operating model as a multi-stakeholder initiative. Collaboration between all development actors is essential to meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda, support countries build back better from the pandemic and take urgent action on the climate emergency. Meanwhile, COVID-19 has been described as “a stress test for development effectiveness principles for all GPEDC constituencies”¹, impacting their own operations at country level, and how they collaborate with others. The subsequent “economic crisis further underscored the need for the most effective use of all resources available to counter the expected increase of poverty levels and growing economic and social inequalities”². In this context, building trust between actors, using the right tools and creating an enabling environment in which all partners can thrive, innovate and scale-up their efforts is more important than ever.

The COVID-19 crisis has shown clear examples of how effective collaboration can support the achievement of development outcomes. As the spread of the virus forced countries to commit their already constrained budgets to address the most urgent challenges brought about by the measures to curb the pandemic, other stakeholders felt compelled to step up their co-operation to scale up efforts by national and local governments. For example in Bangladesh, an innovative triage and testing booth emerged from the collaboration between the social enterprise Digital Healthcare Solutions (DH), the private foundation Institute for Developing Science and Health Initiatives (ideSHi Foundation), and Mugda Medical College and Hospital in Dhaka, contributing to the emergency COVID-19 response. This example is one of the four case studies published by the GPEDC's Business Leaders Caucus to illustrate how the Kampala Principles can be implemented and make a difference in multi-stakeholder partnerships at the country level. The Kampala Principles were launched in 2019 to enhance the effectiveness of development co-operation partnerships with the private sector at the country level and globally.

The pandemic has critically hampered the participation of other stakeholders in partnerships and affected the role they play in society. A study by the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) highlights the challenges and the opportunities of the pandemic to CSOs' effectiveness. It argues that the crisis has provided the pretext for repressive governments to crack down further on freedoms, including CSO space, while at the same time, reasonable COVID-restrictions, such as travel bans, lockdowns and social distancing measures, have inevitably also impacted CSO operations and engagement. At the same time, COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated the structural inequalities that CSOs have campaigned on, such as gender, income, insecure work, and the value of CSO-government partnerships to address them.

1) CPDE, One Year On: COVID-19 has made CSOs' effectiveness harder on many fronts.

2) GPEDC, Co-chairs statement on the COVID-19 Global Pandemic: https://www.effectivecooperation.org/system/files/2020-06/COVID-19_Pandemic_and_New_Work_Programme-GPEDC_Co-Chairs_Statement-ENG.pdf

Session 3: Development effectiveness in fragile contexts

What are the main dilemmas and trade-offs faced by development actors working in fragile contexts and how are these being overcome?

The risk of fragility, crises and violent conflict undermining the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is becoming increasingly acute, with more countries experiencing violent conflict now than in the last three decades. Crises are increasingly complex, protracted or recurrent, and in its most recent States of Fragility report, the OECD estimates that 23% of the world's population, and 77% of those classified before COVID-19 as extremely poor, live in "fragile" contexts. Rather than being a direct driver of fragility, the report describes COVID-19 as compounding existing fragilities. The widening gap between peaceful and less peaceful countries, exacerbated by environmental degradation and climate change, makes it more important than ever to focus development efforts in these places.

For development actors however, this poses a series of challenges. In the most difficult contexts, effectiveness criteria such as country ownership, mutual accountability and transparency may be weak. Meanwhile a focus on results can generate significant disincentives to engage where donors are under pressure to demonstrate cost effectiveness and impact. Yet as poverty and other needs become increasingly concentrated in such places, such tensions are difficult to avoid. One outcome of these challenges has been the continued and increasing use of humanitarian assistance rather than longer term development cooperation, leading to calls not only for increased levels of support, but shifts in the nature of support from reactive response to engagement and investments driving sustainable outcomes.

Development outcomes in fragile contexts are dependent on actors and processes beyond the development community. Adopted in 2019 the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus recognises both the importance of peace in achieving development goals and the often political implications of achieving progress and leaving no one behind. Setting out a framework for greater coherence and coordinated efforts by development, humanitarian and peace actors, it widens the community of partners striving for collective outcomes. Further, while effective and legitimate state institutions are important, opportunities also lie beyond central or regional governments, with significant capacity and resilience held within communities and civil society. Maximising such partnerships at both strategic and operational levels brings both opportunities and challenges³.

3) See, for example, A study on the implementation of the triple nexus by Development Initiatives highlighting the tensions within the new peace aspect between political agendas around security and stabilisation and needs-based, principled humanitarian aid.

Session 4: Implementing development co-operation effectiveness principles at country level

How can the principles of effective development co-operation guide and strengthen a multi-stakeholder response to COVID-19 at the country level?

The four principles of effective development co-operation - i) country ownership; ii) focus on results; iii) inclusive partnerships; and iv) transparency and mutual accountability - manifest and matter most at the level of country implementation. This is highlighted in the 2020-2022 Work Programme of the Global Partnership which places partner country realities, opportunities and challenges front and centre⁴. This session seeks to explore how the current context of the pandemic has affected implementation of development effectiveness principles at country level and what lessons can be drawn/opportunities arise from country experiences in this regard.

The principle of country ownership - i.e. countries setting their own national development priorities and development partners aligning with countries' priorities and systems - is key to effective and sustained support. The call to reverse the declining trend of development partners' alignment to partner countries' priorities and results frameworks has become particularly acute under the pandemic, where the need to focus support to where it is most needed is critical.

A regional and country-level review of the pandemic response by the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) finds that implementation of the principle of country ownership in the development of COVID-19 response plans has been uneven⁵. While many countries have incorporated development priorities into their national response plans, participation of and coordination with other stakeholders has been mixed at national and subnational levels. And while development partner support to national strategies has translated into effective use of national systems in some countries, such as Kyrgyzstan, where the majority of foreign assistance in response to COVID has been channelled through budget support, elsewhere information of alignment remains mixed and inconclusive.

All four principles are critical for an effective pandemic response and for recovery, and need to be mainstreamed in stakeholders' development co-operation practices at the country level, as highlighted by the GPEDC Co-chairs in a joint statement. Multiple initiatives, such as the Global Partnership webinar series are collating and sharing evidence on country level challenges and lessons. The Global Partnership has also called upon partner countries

4) The Global Partnership's 2017-2018 Work Programme had already produced a Compendium of Good Practices to provide guidance to partner country governments, as well as other development actors working at the country level, on good practices for implementing effectiveness principles/commitments. The compendium is available at: <https://www.effectivecooperation.org/content/global-compendium-good-practices>

5) CPDE 2021. Available at <https://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CPDE-Global-Synthesis-World-in-Lockdown-Development-on-Hold-2021-EN-1.pdf>

to lead “Action Dialogues”. These country-led dialogues aim to bring stakeholders together and to build a shared understanding, directions and actions on why and how effectiveness of development co-operation/partnerships matters for building back better from COVID-19 and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda⁶. Furthermore, the Global Partnership workstream (“Action Area 1.1”) on demonstrating the impact of effectiveness, led by the European Commission, will invite partner countries to participate in initiatives that examine the impact of the implementation of the effectiveness principles within a sector on a specific SDG priority at country level.

6) As of October 2021, 19 countries have committed to undertake GPEDC Action Dialogues while two countries (Rwanda and Honduras) have already completed their Dialogues. The list of countries and more information is available at: <https://www.effectivecooperation.org/content/action-dialogues-2021-effective-development-co-operation-briefs>

Session 5: Monitoring Reform of the GPEDC

How can reform of Global Partnership monitoring strengthen use of results to drive behavioural changes and deliver impact at country level?

The Global Partnership monitoring exercise is at the heart of what the Global Partnership does by seeking to track progress on internationally-agreed development effectiveness commitments, encourage multi-stakeholder dialogue, inspire behaviour change and lead to increased development impact. The exercise is country-led and participation is voluntary, with 99 different countries participating in one or more of the three rounds of monitoring that have taken place since 2011, in collaboration with their development partners and key national actors. Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, data generated through GPEDC's monitoring exercise also contributes to measuring progress on three SDG targets (17.15, 17.16 and 5c).

While successive GPEDC monitoring rounds have highlighted key achievements - for example the 2019 Progress Report noted that partner country governments had made significant progress in strengthening national development planning - there have also been significant challenges, with progress on some indicators stalled or even going into reverse. The same report noted that development partners' alignment to partner country priorities and country-owned results frameworks was declining; forward visibility of development co-operation at country level was weakening; strengthened public financial management (PFM) systems had not been matched with significantly increased use by development partners; and the enabling environment for civil society organisations is deteriorating.

Against this background, and in recognition of the fact that structural shifts in development co-operation at country level have implications for the Global Partnership monitoring exercise, GPEDC is currently concluding a reform of the exercise to ensure its continued relevance in a changing world. The intention is for a new round of GPEDC monitoring to be launched following the High-Level Meeting in 2022.

With that process and timeline in mind, this discussion at the 2021 Busan Forum will provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on how Global Partnership monitoring results have in the past, and can continue in the future, to drive behavioural changes and deliver impact at country level.

Session 6: The future of the GPEDC and the way forward

How can the GPEDC strengthen its demonstrated impact and the HLM3 reinvigorate the actions by all stakeholders to improve effectiveness at the country level?

The 2021 Busan Forum takes place as GPEDC develops plans for the third High-Level Meeting (HLM3) in Switzerland towards the end of next year, which is being framed as a 2022 Summit on Development Effectiveness. In a rapidly changing context, dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to take urgent action on climate change, and the imperative of protecting the most vulnerable from both, it is the right time to reinvigorate the development effectiveness agenda and galvanise concrete actions for more effective development cooperation. This year's Forum therefore provides a timely opportunity for broader consultation with key stakeholders on political and strategic ambitions for the HLM3.

GPEDC's co-chairs launched the GPEDC review earlier this year, with the view to help strengthen GPEDC delivering its mandate - supporting the implementation of the 2030 agenda by maximising the effectiveness of all forms of cooperation for development. Building on the GPEDC review where the GPEDC mandate assessed as relevant and the effective development cooperation principles as remaining valid, ambitious plans are being developed for next year's Summit, with the aim of using this moment to mobilise high-level political support, demonstrate how the effectiveness principles can unlock and scale up solutions to development challenges in different country contexts and strengthen the impact of development co-operation in delivering the 2030 Agenda.
