

Key to Effective Development Cooperation: Time-bound action plan, differentiated private sector engagement, and an enabled civil society

From commitment to action: Time-bound action plan

At its recent Senior Level Meeting (SLM), the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC)¹ reviewed progress and charted a course on how to advance effective development cooperation (EDC). The result: a mixed picture.

On the one hand, there is significant progress in terms of quality, inclusivity and use of SDGs in developing country and development partners' planning. The Global Partnership also instituted a new way of cooperating among stakeholders, including the expansion of leadership to include a Co-Chair representing non-executive constituencies (which is currently represented by Reality of Aid Africa's Vitalice Meja). On the other, there is backtracking in the "unfinished business,"² alignment of development partners' cooperation to partner country priorities and country-owned results framework, transparency of development cooperation, and providing an enabling environment for civil society – these despite repeated affirmation of the Paris commitments in Accra, Busan, Nairobi, and yet again at this SLM.

Thus, Reality of Aid welcomes the SLM's call to urgently address new initiatives on the use of country systems and unttying aid. We echo calls to joint actions to analyze the different constraints on shared support to civil society, and to identify, implement and disseminate solutions to enable CSOs' full contribution to sustainable development. We welcome the creation of a work stream to develop a time-bound Global Action Plan to review the commitments, identify what remains to be done, assess the bottlenecks and how to overcome them, and come up with a menu of actions, solutions and approaches with appropriate indicators and methodologies for assessing progress.

Then again, meeting the SDGs requires a multi-stakeholder approach and leaving no one behind. And that cannot be emphasized more given the threat to humanity's survival posed by the climate emergency that we now find ourselves in. Inclusive as it is (or as it tries to be), however, the GPEDC has not only been unable to get its constituents to meet their targets, but also been unable to meaningfully engage key players from the South and many non-OECD countries. Much work needs to be done as stakeholders show lack of political will, and decreased appetite in the GPEDC and for fulfilling their EDC commitments.

But translating commitments to action requires not only time-bound action plans and engaging all actors. Equally if not most important for CSOs is a commitment to uphold people's rights and rights-based approaches. The big question is how do you build and broaden ownership, creating pressure from the ground while also providing tools for individual stakeholders to implement specific actions?



¹ GPEDC brings together traditional providers, developing country partners, CSOs, parliamentarians, foundations and business associations around a broad agenda for effective development cooperation (EDC) - the main purpose and core objective of which is to improve development results at country level. At the 2011 Busan High Level Forum, it adopted four key principles to guide the reform of their development cooperation practices understood to be consistent with international commitments on human rights, decent work, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and disability: (i) country ownership of development priorities by partner developing countries; (ii) focus on results, aligned with the priorities and policies set out by developing countries themselves; (iii) inclusive development partnerships; and (iv) transparency and mutual accountability. These principles and stakeholder commitments were aligned towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda at the GPEDC High-Level Meeting in Nairobi in 2016. The GPEDC was charged with the responsibility to monitor progress in implementing these principles.

² Refers to unfinished development effectiveness commitments of various development actors as embodied in the abovementioned four "Busan Principles"

Differentiated private sector engagement

The private sector does have a crucial role in development and the Kampala Principles are a welcome step to ensuring their effective engagement. It has to be kept in mind, however, that as a non-monolithic actor, the different private sector entities – ranging from micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to multi- and transnational corporations engaged in different development cooperation programs/activities and having varying impacts on people's lives – require a differentiated approach. For as the Kampala Principles acknowledge, there are risks associated with private sector engagement in development cooperation.

The principle of inclusive country ownership states the need for *inclusive and equitable* process of developing national policy frameworks which includes explicitly defining PSE goals and private sector roles *based on national priorities*. While MSMEs, trade unions, civil society, women's groups, etc. are targeted under the third principle (inclusive participation, discussed below), they should also be meaningfully involved in the process of building country-owned national policy frameworks to ensure such frameworks are indeed based on national priorities. A challenge would be how to ensure, for example, that there is *equitable* MSME, trade union and civil society inclusion in *and ownership* of national policy frameworks amidst powerful corporate lobby at international and local levels.

The results and targeted impact principle calls for clearly identified, well-defined and measurable sustainable development *and* business outcomes; predicting, avoiding and remedying 'unintended' negative impacts; and ensuring that partnerships recognize and respect the needs and incentives of *all* partners. Mountains of evidence already exist as bases for 'predicting' the 'unintended' negative impacts of the drive for enormous profits. Is there really a way to avoid or remedy, e.g. slave-rate wages for workers as corporations engaged in development amass profits? How do we avoid or remedy massive displacement of indigenous peoples and peasants from their lands in the name of development infrastructure, or exploitation of cheap labor in the name of attracting private sector to create jobs? These are some questions that need further fleshing out. The Kampala Principles offers a good starting point by reiterating development partners and governments' obligation to ensure compliance with agreed international standards, safeguards and regulations when working with the private sector or when the private sector is implementing a project on their behalf.

The principle of transparency and accountability involves providing information on the outcomes of partnerships, including through inclusive dialogue, in order to learn, improve transparency and remain accountable to the partners involved, beneficiary communities and citizens at large. A necessary addition to this would be dissemination not just of the outcomes – but also these set of principles, the frameworks, the needs assessment, the processes and resources used, extent of compliance to international standards and nationally owned frameworks, and as many other details that would help stakeholders, most importantly the impoverished

and marginalized/excluded, to understand and engage in the development process. In ensuring accountability mainly of the private sectors and particularly corporations, the Kampala Principles can go further by reaffirming and providing support to CSOs' watchdog role, beginning with providing them with an enabling environment.

The last Kampala principle acknowledges that 'targeting the furthest behind through private sector engagement (PSE) requires greater risk-taking on the part of all partners involved' thus making it essential to recognize, *share proportionally* and mitigate such

	PRINCIPLE 1	INCLUSIVE COUNTRY OWNERSHIP Strengthening co-ordination, alignment and capacity building at the country level
	PRINCIPLE 2	RESULTS AND TARGETED IMPACT Realising sustainable development outcomes through mutual benefits
	PRINCIPLE 3	INCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIP Fostering trust through inclusive dialogue and consultation
	PRINCIPLE 4	TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY Measuring and disseminating sustainable development results for learning and scaling up of successes
	PRINCIPLE 5	LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND Recognising, sharing and mitigating risks for all partners

increased risk. As reaching those left behind can mean promoting partnerships in markets that have higher risks, proportionate risk-sharing, it says, will incentivize private sector contributions. Who will share the risk? What will such risk-sharing entail for the already impoverished communities and marginalized/excluded sectors? The other side of the coin that is worth looking into as well is the risk for people to experience worse poverty or greater exploitation. Indeed, as the Kampala principles recommend, there is a need to carry out a joint assessment of the potential risks *for* (better if *with*) the beneficiaries of the partnership as part of due diligence, and develop systems to monitor these risks, 'bringing in appropriate civil society partners as needed and undertaking course correction where necessary'. Furthermore, the role of ODA in incentivizing private sector contributions and mitigating risks should be aimed towards MSMEs and smaller social enterprises and protecting the people and the environment.

A welcome development as it is, the Kampala Principles' voluntary nature leaves us wondering how many actors, especially big private sector actors, will actually demonstrate adherence/compliance, and leaves us reiterating the need for democratically-owned national frameworks and mechanisms for regulating the private sector. Nonetheless, adherence to it should be monitored to see the extent to which private sector engagement in development and the use of ODA³ to encourage that will support Southern farmers and micro, small and medium formal, informal, and social enterprises to help them advance sustainable agriculture and national industrialization; and regulate and exact accountability to the corporations especially those engaged in unsustainable, destructive production practices.

The Belgrade Call to Action, stop the attacks on CSOs and uphold peoples' rights now!

As the GPEDC struggles to get its constituents meet their targets and to engage other key players like Southern providers, civil society organizations have always been asserting and exercising their right to meaningful engagement as development actors. They have been consistent and will continue to push for transparency and accountability for all actors in their development effectiveness commitments. For CPDE, this first SLM is a reaffirmation of the importance of development effectiveness principles which CSOs have been unrelentingly championing as a measure of development outcomes.

However, as Civicus monitored, *more than eighty percent (80%) of the world's population - 6 billion people living in 111 countries - face a situation where either the conditions are closed for civil society (23 countries), or where civil society is highly repressed (35 countries), or where civil society faces substantial legal and political obstacles (53 countries). And CSOs across the world are deeply troubled as 'civic actors across many sectors are being threatened, persecuted and killed; harassed through arbitrary arrest, detention, the targeted use of legal and regulatory measures and restrictions on CSO finances. Others are deliberately discredited as criminals or "foreign agents." Civic leaders are being physically harmed, with women's human rights defenders facing sexual harassment and abuse - all because they seek to protect peoples' human rights, while promoting democratic participation on issues that affect their lives* (Belgrade Call to Action).



³ The 2018 ROA Report provides a more comprehensive discussion, some case studies, and recommendations on ODA and private sector engagement

This is and can be further aggravated by the current trends in showing increased militarization of aid and its diversion to countries and purposes linked to the strategic security interests of major provider countries - despite long-standing DAC principles that ODA should not support financing of military equipment or services. In 2016, DAC members reached an agreement to expand the definitions of ODA activities relating to police and military training, counter-terrorism and the prevention of extreme violence, as well as support for military forces in UN mandated peace operations. The 2018 RoA Report provides some examples of how this endangers civil society activists and organizations. Besides ODA, triangular cooperation is also now seen as essential to improving performance and safety of peacekeepers.

It cannot be denied that the SDGs or any genuine development will never happen without a fully engaged civil society, and as such, governments must take concrete actions to stop the attacks, reverse the trend of shrinking civic space and uphold people's right to development. RoA reiterates its call to stop the militarization of aid and development cooperation, and echoes the Belgrade Call to Action for UN member states to **urgently**:

- 👉 *institute enabling laws and regulations, democratic accountability based on human rights norms and human rights standards, and the full protection of civil society under attack – such as social leaders, human rights defenders and gender equality activists;*
- 👉 *embed inclusion and meaningful accountability to people in development practices;*
- 👉 *implement and respect democratic country ownership of national development plans and implement transparency and accountability for inclusive SDG delivery;*
- 👉 *lead by example with concerted action to challenge major human rights violations, including deteriorating conditions facing peoples' organizations, trade unions, women's rights organizations, indigenous peoples, and community-based environmentalists, among many others; and*
- 👉 *recognize the importance of the inter-connected themes in achieving Agenda 2030 -- civil society voice, eradicating poverty, women's empowerment, fighting inequality, decent work, climate action and environmental justice. ###*



The author, Lyn Angelica Pano, is the Global Coordinator of The Reality of Aid Network, a pre-eminent Southern-led North-South CSO network advocating for reforms in the policies and practices on aid and development cooperation (lpano@realityofaid.org; www.realityofaid.org).

Photos taken from csopartnership.org and effectivecooperation.org