



The Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation **SUSTAINING THE DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS AGENDA**

Efforts to promote development effectiveness have stagnated as donor peer pressure eroded and developing country leadership waned. An assessment of the desirable contributions from global platforms to advance the agenda is needed to carry key principles forward.


Following the 2015 sustainable development and climate change agreements, attention has now turned to translating these vast agendas into action. As one of many policy fields addressed, development cooperation faces the dual challenge of delivering on long-standing commitments and of reinventing itself to address a broadened core mandate. In July 2016, at UN Headquarters, the High-Level Political Forum on

RECOMMENDATIONS

Governments and other stakeholders should:

- Revive the development effectiveness agenda and broaden the coalition interested in the “how” of development cooperation.
- Consider whether and how DCF and GPEDC should function, given their partly overlapping mandates.
- Fine-tune the scope and mandate of the GPEDC to increase visibility and complementarity.

Governments and other stakeholders should take advantage of the New York discussions to openly reflect on the GPEDC's future direction



Two years of deliberations between the leaderships of the DCF and GPEDC have failed to determine clear complementarities between the fora, leaving the discussion unsatisfactorily open.

Sustainable Development (HLPF) will provide a milestone in determining how governments will implement commitments, assess achievements, and promote learning. When the HLPF concludes, the UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) will convene its 5th Biennial High-Level Meeting to discuss how to reframe and promote development cooperation effectiveness in the Agenda 2030 context. Towards the end of the year in Nairobi the 2nd High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development (GPEDC) will address similar themes.

Given that the latter two high-level meetings pursue similar aims, within and outside the UN system respectively, governments and other stakeholders should take advantage of the New York discussions to openly reflect on the GPEDC's future direction and strategic niche, going beyond diplomatic considerations of how the GPEDC can complement UN processes to raise the question of whether the platform should continue to exist in its current form. Two years of deliberations between the leaderships of the DCF and GPEDC have failed to determine clear complementarities between the fora, leaving the discussion unsatisfactorily open. Resolving this problem requires an inclusive process that brings governments long disengaged from collective effectiveness discussions back to the debate.

The origins and realities of the GPEDC

The GPEDC represents the continuation of a long process of international dialogue to promote aid effectiveness. This agenda gained traction at the UN's Financing for Development Conference (FFD) in Monterrey in 2002, and was further developed under OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) leadership. Consecutive agreements gradually expanded donor commitments to improve

coordination, their focus on nationally determined priorities, and efforts to assess results, while developing countries committed to taking leadership to guide donor efforts and enable innovative approaches. The Busan High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011 sought to fundamentally enlarge this global "effectiveness movement", acknowledging the diversifying field of actors (South-South cooperation providers, private foundations, civil society organisations, and other private sector entities) and emphasising that respect for common principles such as country ownership and transparency could guide cooperation, regardless of the labels attached to various actors. These efforts provided the basis for the GPEDC.

The Partnership's first activities focused on adapting OECD-DAC platforms to involve a broader range of stakeholders. In spite of its innovations, the GPEDC had difficulty generating momentum from its inception. One explanation for this was the uneven engagement of the core stakeholders who had strongly driven the process pre-2011, including several OECD-DAC donors and influential African states. Moreover, initial GPEDC leadership priorities proved unhelpful, with the first co-chairs prioritising thematic projects (e.g. illicit financial flows and knowledge sharing), muddling up the overall mandate and agenda. The current leadership has, in contrast, readjusted to the core effectiveness agenda, rightly focusing on improving implementation practices. In addition, "new" actors that were targeted for outreach engaged reluctantly. Their lacklustre interest was apparent at the GPEDC's otherwise well-attended first High-Level Meeting in Mexico City in April 2014: China and India were notably absent from the meeting and Brazil did not play an active role, retracting from tentative commitments in Busan.

The Mexico City meeting resulted in the endorsement of a slate of voluntary initiatives focused on specific stakeholder groups or topics such as tax administration and public sector reform. These Partnership Initiatives varied in their ambition, scope, participant composition, and output. Apart from sharing a GPEDC roof, many of the initiatives have little in common and the absence of a dedicated bottom-up process to convey findings to the GPEDC leadership has limited their overall influence. The initiatives were one of the GPEDC's three main activity areas, alongside high-level dialogue and the development of a monitoring framework to assess progress on priorities, including improving the transparency and predictability of aid. A GPEDC umbrella may not be needed to sustain progress in active initiatives that are either linked to OECD work programmes or otherwise reasonably independent. A focus on a smaller number of initiatives addressing specific dimensions of implementation could provide a stronger indication of the GPEDC's mission and ability to influence practice.

Key areas for reflection for GPEDC stakeholders

Upcoming discussions on the GPEDC's future should continue and conclude reflection about the GPEDC's

comparative advantage in relation to the DCF. The DCF has been privileged as a platform for promoting effective cooperation by UN processes such as the July 2015 Financing for Development (FFD) conference, yet a separate FFD follow-up process was agreed to with no clear links to the DCF, signalling the DCF's own tenuous status within the UN system. These reflections should primarily concern the platform's membership, which since 2011 has proved largely uncommitted to following soft governance standards to promote more effective cooperation. An ongoing trend of "re-bilateralisation" of development cooperation manifest in the reduced appetite for joint action, increased informal aid tying, and earmarking of contributions to multilateral organisations hampers the effectiveness agenda. Clear champions are needed to revive it and encourage wider political commitment and engagement.

The GPEDC's function as a high-level forum for multi-stakeholder dialogue promoting knowledge sharing on effective development cooperation overlaps with the DCF's mandate. While both platforms articulate an interest in coherent or complementary action with the other, a basic question for the future is whether the two platforms should continue

The UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF)	The Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC)	The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Proposed in World Summit Outcome in 2005 and launched in 2007 ■ Under aegis of ECOSOC ■ Convenes high-level biennial meetings, reviews development cooperation trends and promotes coherence among diverse actors ■ Aims to strengthen links between UN normative and operational functions and facilitate learning among member states ■ 2016 forum focuses on development cooperation in Agenda 2030 implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Outgrowth of aid effectiveness agreements, established in 2012 ■ Three ministerial level co-chairs ■ Joint secretariat managed by OECD and UNDP ■ Mandated to maintain momentum for effective development cooperation through high-level meetings and monitoring Busan commitments ■ Stocktaking of development effectiveness principles and commitments and showcasing of innovative approaches on agenda for 2016 high-level meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Emerged from Rio + 20 summit in 2012 as successor to Commission on Sustainable Development ■ Under aegis of UN General Assembly and ECOSOC ■ Annual inter-governmental forum on follow-up and implementation of Agenda 2030 ■ Aims to track progress and promote coherence ■ National and thematic reviews of SDG progress focus of 2016 meeting

to exist in parallel, as their work programmes currently lead to duplication and the kinds of inefficiencies that both platforms are formally tasked to counter. Neither forum has an operational role, posing a challenge in terms of strengthening the country-level relevance of their work. Though the DCF currently lacks analytical capacities, its linkage to the UN system may be advantageous in expanding participation in effectiveness discussions and strengthening multilateral cooperation at country level. However, it still needs to liberate itself from its narrow aid agenda and confront shortcomings in the UN system as a promoter of effective cooperation derived from a persistent North–South political divide among member states. If the DCF is privileged as a forum for advancing the effectiveness agenda, its capabilities to more effectively exercise this role in the future need to be examined.

The HLPF will address the third dimension of the GPEDC's work programme by promoting a framework for monitoring and review of Agenda 2030 implementation. The proposed HLPF review mechanisms are more expansive than those associated with the GPEDC given the scope of Agenda 2030 priorities. At the same time, the HLPF assigns greater responsibility in implementation to national governments, whereas the GPEDC framework largely focuses on actions taken by development cooperation providers with a stronger focus on non-governmental actors. In spite of its common affiliation with ECOSOC, the DCF faces a similar challenge in articulating its added value in relation to the HLPF, given the latter's more encompassing mandate. The respective contributions

of these platforms in Agenda 2030 monitoring and review remain poorly defined, while the Addis FFD Conference only reaffirmed the existing effectiveness agenda and gave no new impetus.

Ways forward

A clear challenge facing all involved is determining how to salvage learning from the GPEDC while expanding the circle of stakeholders committing to a more collaborative approach to implementation. The DCF is inclusive by design, but exemplifies a trade-off between inclusiveness and effectiveness, having to work within UN "straitjacket" processes that privilege neutrality over creativity and innovation.

The upcoming High-Level Forum in Nairobi will play a key role in defining the GPEDC's response to this challenge. If the GPEDC is assessed following the four Busan principles for effective cooperation that it advances – namely, ownership, a focus on results, inclusive development partnerships, transparency and accountability – it is underperforming. Hence, a critical examination of its achievements and future role is urgently needed. At the same time, the DCF should overcome resistance to adopting innovative elements of the GPEDC agenda.

Unless a strong effort is undertaken to directly engage all common stakeholders of the GPEDC and DCF in determining a suitable "joint venture" between both fora, they will continue to divide stakeholder attention and will remain fundamentally ill equipped to support the realisation of a universal, differentiated and transformative global development agenda.

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