



**Reflections on the 2016 GPEDC Progress Report,  
Making Development Co-operation More Effective**

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November 6, 2016**

**A) The Overview**

1. Overall the Progress Report, if read in its entirety, succeeds in presenting a balanced view on both progress and significant challenges in implementing the four Busan principles since 2011. Given the limitations in the methodology for some of the monitoring indicators (which are sometimes acknowledged in the text), the authors make a serious effort to draw on not only the data from 81 country National Coordinators reports of the second round of monitoring earlier this year, but also on credible related documentation that allows for a deeper analysis, including CPDE's own global evidence for Indicator Two on trends in the CSO enabling environment.<sup>1</sup>
2. However, almost all of this nuance, particularly in relation to the implications of continued challenges, is developed in the detailed analytical chapters (chapters 2 to 5). The Overview chapter, which will be the only chapter most will read, seems to be deliberately structured to reflect a more positive spin on progress.
3. While this Overview does suggest that progress in effective development cooperation is developing "at an irregular pace," the opening paragraph in this section unreservedly states that "the results of the 2016 monitoring round testify to important progress towards achieving the development effectiveness goals agreed in Busan". (18) Positive progress is then presented in an unqualified manner for each of the four Busan principles, with sometimes a short paragraph that points to a few remaining challenges for that principle. But these challenges don't seemingly undermine or affect the "progress" made, which is the primary narrative in this chapter.
4. The most grievous example of this positive spin in the Overview is the complete absence of any recognition that the enabling environment for CSOs, a key partner in the Global Partnership, has in fact deteriorated significantly since Busan, despite the Busan commitment by all governments to create such an environment, "consistent with agreed rights." The entire focus for CSOs in this short Overview section on inclusive partnerships is on positive progress in consultative dialogues with CSOs, and even here the section lacks any reference to serious issues in the quality of these dialogues, which is set out in the analysis of Chapter 4 on inclusive partnerships.

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<sup>1</sup> Accessible at <http://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/GPEDC-Indicator-Two.pdf>.

5. The Overview has no acknowledgement of the implications that “governments need to be more systematic in involving civil society” and that currently “the quality of engagement varies,” that access to government information, so essential for constructive dialogue, is affected by the Report’s own observation that “the scope of accessible information is often limited or selective.”(86, 87) Likewise there is no reference to the widely-recognized deteriorating legal and regulatory environment for CSOs and the Report’s proposal that governments need to “improve regulations that will facilitate the operational functioning of CSOs and will not marginalize any social group.” (94) As the Report states in Chapter 4:

“Citizens’ engagement in rule making is another area of low performance. The governments of most reporting countries have not made any progress or show a negative trend in public consultation when preparing regulations that affect citizens and the business community.” (85)

These issues very seriously affect the Overview’s notion that “greater inclusiveness is helping to create synergies and capitalise on diverse and complementary contributions.” (20)

6. The Overview rightly affirms, “the Global Partnership monitoring drives change in the way development cooperation is provided by generating evidence to highlight where attention is needed and encourage members to respond to the evidence by agreeing on individual and collective action to accelerate progress.” (16) This goal is at the center of the draft theory of change and proposed mandate that the GPEDC is now considering. But without a clear articulation of the main issues and challenges, this overarching purpose for monitoring is ill-served by the presentation of evidence in the Overview.
7. According to the Overview conclusion, the main task ahead is to “identify, disseminate and replicate successful approaches to development cooperation on the ground.” (25) Acknowledging progress where evidence demonstrates its relevance is crucial. But also clearly and sharply demonstrating up front how this progress may be partial, and may be potentially undermined by the very significant challenges that continue to exist in achieving behaviour change on the ground, is also critical to GPEDC change model and the opportunities presented by its unique multi-stakeholder character.
8. The Overview calls for “honest dialogue between countries and development partners to address persistent constraint,” (25) but the GPEDC itself seemingly cannot bring itself to identify clearly these constraints in its own summary of the evidence. The foundation of honest dialogue must not only be a shared understanding of success factors, but also the origins of bottlenecks and constraints, which is largely lacking from the Overview.
9. While far from comprehensive, the detailed chapters thankfully do lay out some of these constraints and bottlenecks. Some limitations in evidence in this regard are also due to limitations in the indicator methodologies. The Monitoring Advisory Group (MAG) has recently contributed detailed recommendations for strengthening the ten indicators and their methodologies to enable more relevant and useful data from the monitoring process and to strongly link GPEDC monitoring to country reviews and assessments of progress in achieving the

SDGs.<sup>2</sup> These recommendations can also provide an optic for examining the detailed assessment of progress in the thematic chapters of the Progress Report.

## **B) Progress in Putting the Busan Principles into Action**

### **a) Focus on development results (Indicators 1a and 1b)**

#### **Alignment with country-led results framework (Indicator One)**

10. The Report champions the fact that virtually all countries participating in the monitoring have in place a country-led results framework, which in their various forms articulate the country's priorities, targets and indicators (indicator 1b). However, it also underlines the challenges in moving from a stated plan and priorities to results-based budgeting and implementation of these priorities. Given this gap between planning (country results frameworks) and implementation, how relevant for country ownership of priorities is the result in indicator 1a that development partners are deriving their objectives and results indicators from these results frameworks?
11. This question is again highlighted by the monitoring that barely half of these interventions use data from the governments' own monitoring systems and statistics (which may also be the result of limited capacities of these systems). Given the importance of integrating national SDG targets and indicators in national planning processes and strategies, the Report rightly stressed the importance of strengthening inclusive country planning processes and their linkages to budgeting and implementation for both partner countries and providers.
12. The MAG's analysis of this indicator emphasized the importance of looking at both the characteristics of country results frameworks, but also at the different modalities by which these frameworks are systematically included in the different aspects of development providers' project/programs. These can include the process for determining provider country assistance strategies, the degree to which providers are using budget support mechanisms and the rationale for other modalities in given country contexts, and the degree to which there are joint country situation assessments with country counterparts (Paris Declaration indicator 10). Unfortunately, the ways forward rightly focuses on the interconnectedness with country determination of SDG priorities, but is silent on greater attention to provider modalities for alignment with country results processes.
13. A step towards greater attention to provider behaviour is the question in indicator (1a): "The share of new interventions that plan a final (ex post) evaluation supported by the government."

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<sup>2</sup> I was a member of the Monitoring Advisory Group from April 2015 to September 2016, and acted as the chairperson of its meetings and presented its recommendations to the GPEDC Co-Chairs and Steering Committee. The MAG recommendations can be found at <http://effectivecooperation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/MAG-Final-Report.pdf>, and <http://effectivecooperation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/MAG-Final-Report-Summary.pdf>, with detailed recommendations on indicators at <http://effectivecooperation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Assessing-the-Current-Indicator-Framework-Annex-Six.pdf>.

The MAG saw this question as a starting point to engaging governments in joint evaluations and promoting governments to evaluation development cooperation interventions. It is encouraging that some form of evaluation “supported by government” was planned for 77% of the interventions under review; the findings unfortunately do not indicate the degree to which government is involved in these evaluations.

14. Indicator 1b asked questions relating to the characteristics of the country’s results framework. The Report brings out some of this detail, but the narrative is silent on the crucial question of inclusion in results planning: “Are other non-government stakeholders (parliament, private sector, civil society, trade unions, subnational entities) engaged in the definition of country’s priorities, goals and targets? If so, what are the mechanisms of engagement?”
15. The Busan commitment is to align with country results framework, which suggests that the expression of such frameworks is the outcome of a country consultative process. There may be more than one country results framework. Providers may align with a range of legitimate results frameworks for country development actors, some of whom, such as national civil society, work in development independent of government. The methodology for indicator 1a asked providers, “who leads in the implementation of an intervention,” but this important question is not analyzed.
16. The Report and the indicator take a seemingly technical and inter-governmental approach to aligning with results frameworks. The limitations of this approach is highlighted the MAG recommendations (Annex 6, 9-11), which call for
  - A broader multi-stakeholder and more nuanced approach to understanding alignment with country results, including provider modalities, and
  - Critical attention to the question of inclusion in processes related to Country Results Frameworks, their development and implementation, given the emphasis of multi-stakeholder partnerships and inclusion in realizing Agenda 2030.

## **b) Country ownership of development co-operation (Indicators 9a, 9b, 10, 5a, 5b)**

### **Use of country systems (Indicator Nine)**

17. The Report rightly stresses the fundamental importance of country ownership, “the principle by which countries determine their own development priorities, and based on these, define, lead and implement their preferred model of development.” (60) Country ownership is the first Busan principle, followed by the second principle, a focus on development results (the priorities and policies set out by developing countries themselves). It is therefore somewhat inexplicable why the Report seems to discuss country ownership separate from focusing on country results framework, and places it in second order in the Report’s chapters. No explanation is given for this seeming change in emphasis.

18. The GPEDC indicators for understanding the degree to which country ownership is embedded in provider practice are important, but largely cover technical areas – the use of country financial management systems, the degree to which aid is untied and country procurement systems are used by providers, and the short and medium term predictability of development cooperation flows. In contrast, the 2011 Busan Partnership outcome document takes a more inclusive approach to “country ownership,” emphasizing actions that “deepen, extend and operationalise the democratic ownership of development policies and processes [emphasis added] [§12a].” The current technical indicators fail to capture these dimensions of ownership. Greater attention is needed towards a more comprehensive analysis, which links issues in indicator 2 (CSO enabling environment) and indicator 7 (mutual accountability) to an analysis of progress for inclusive and democratic country ownership.
19. The overall conclusion is that little progress has been made in most of these areas since 2010. This outcome confirms the MAG’s recommendation that greater attention is needed to teasing out the underlying reasons for this lack of progress. The Report points to some emerging approaches that might help to strengthen country systems (with the unsubstantiated assumption that providers would then use these systems), but has little critical reflection on why so little progress has been achieved. (64-66)
20. The Report points out that in fact there is a considerable divergence in the use of these systems by providers. It relies on multivariate statistical analysis to suggest some possible factors that influence their use. (68) But what is driving this persistent provider behaviour? There is therefore a need for in-depth analysis and perhaps a revision of this indicator to increase its sensitivity to country context. The Report’s analysis does draw on the work of EIP/CABRI.<sup>3</sup> The MAG is recommending greater attention to the latter’s proposals for revising indicator 9a (measuring the quality of a financial institution) for a renewed monitoring framework in 2017.

#### **Development co-operation is predictable (Indicator Five)**

21. Similar conclusions are reached for indicator 5a and 5b on the predictability of provider finance. The outcome of the second monitoring round confirms the expected lack of progress in this area as well. The MAG calls for a dedicated process for understanding the challenges facing providers in forward aid projections and dialogue between providers and developing country governments to improve performance, particularly where providers account for a significant share of the budget for the government sector. (Annex 6, 29 – 31)

#### **Tied Aid (Indicator Ten)**

22. Finally, on tied aid (indicator 10) as a factor indicating country ownership of ODA, the Report notes that ODA reported as untied has increased only marginally since 2010, while also pointing to significant variation among DAC donors. While formal levels of untying may be relatively high, the Report does not make clear the large exclusions from the DAC calculations of bilateral aid

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<sup>3</sup> Effective Institutions Platform (EIP) and Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative (CABRI)

untying – food aid and technical cooperation. But the Report makes an important observation that significant amounts of aid may still be informally tied to providers’ national companies through various characteristics of the procurement system. (71-72) Nevertheless, there are no proposals relating to addressing issues in tied aid in the ways forward. This section in fact focuses mainly on measures to strengthen confidence in developing country effective and accountable institutions, and less on measures that providers might consider.

### **c) Inclusive partnerships for effective development (Indicators 2 and 3)**

#### **CSO enabling environment and CSO development effectiveness (Indicator Two)**

23. The Report makes a strong case for the critical role of broad-based, inclusive partnerships in generating development results for the Busan Partnership agreement and for Agenda 2030. (84) It suggests that “inclusive policy making and programming ensures that those directly affected can contribute to defining and tracking the development policies and programmes that are intended to improve their lives.” (84) CSOs are critical actors for realizing this goal.
24. According to the Report, it is therefore “urgent to remove the obstacles that prevent their effective engagement, and to expand and strengthen spaces for policy dialogue and joint work.” It is then inexplicable why these issues of inclusion and democratic space are not mentioned in the Overview chapter or actively pursued as considerations in other thematic chapters in assessing the progress and challenges facing stakeholders in focusing on results or in realizing country ownership.
25. Chapter four’s analysis of the conditions limiting CSOs as development actors and its suggested ways forward nevertheless will be welcomed by CSOs. Despite being less extensive than some other chapters in the Report, the analysis captures key areas of concern for CSOs as highlighted in the global evidence contributed by CPDE in the second monitoring round. The Report acknowledges that “few [countries] have achieved full enforcement [of constitutional recognition of rights] in practice and unreasonable restrictions continue in varying degrees.” (85)
26. The current level of challenges, which amounts to closing and shrinking space for increasing numbers of CSOs as development actors, might have been more clear if the Report had cited some examples from the CPDE evidence – weak and ambiguous laws that are applied subjectively, intimidation using the legal and regulatory system, lengthy and unreasonably burdensome procedures and transaction costs, and increasing and significant restrictions on access to resources from foreign sources.
27. We have already noted CSO concerns that opportunities for multi-stakeholder dialogue is severely constrained by a lack of progress in the quality of this dialogue, which is referenced but not elaborated substantially in the Report. Some provider consultations with CSOs at the country level have improved, but the emphasis in these consultations is usually on proposals for implementation of existing provider policies and plans, not the appropriateness of policies and plans themselves for country priorities.

28. The Report makes the important observation that significant barriers exist for organizations and individuals representing marginalized and vulnerable populations, including women human rights defenders. (86) These “barriers” include arbitrary arrest, detention, and killing of civic activists with impunity in a growing number of countries. As CPDE notes in its evidence, the true test of an enabling environment for CSOs, consistent with international rights, is whether the rights of those CSOs working in more politically sensitive areas are fully respected and protected. How GPEDC stakeholders can address these particular challenges is not elaborated in the ways forward. But the overarching observation of the need to improve the legal and regulatory environment and operational practices for CSOs and for strengthening and institutionalizing mechanisms for engagement with CSOs are certainly welcomed.

### **Public-private dialogue (Indicator Three)**

29. With respect to public/private dialogue (PPD) and engagement of the private sector (indicator three), the MAG has raised issues with respect to the relevance of this indicator, and in particular the linkage between PPDs and the roles of the private sector in development cooperation. Is PPDs the best entry point for assessing the effectiveness of the private sector as a development actor in the context of Busan commitments to more effective development cooperation? The analysis of the evidence for indicator three does not answer these important questions. Indeed the Report notes that “in most participating countries, small and medium enterprises are usually not part of these platforms [business associations etc], meaning that important voices are missing from the conversation.” (90) Small and medium enterprise are key actors for an inclusive approach to growth and development. The analysis fails to identify the content of PPDs that might be relevant for inclusive development outcomes, nor how other development actors can relate to these dialogues.

### **Multi-stakeholder processes**

30. Finally, this chapter assesses the implementation of the multi-stakeholder process intended for indicators two and three. It takes comfort in the seemingly high level of consensus among stakeholders for the final responses by the government’s contact point for the monitoring exercise (except for issues relating to legal and regulatory environment). The Report acknowledges that CSOs, through CPDE’s country platforms, did make a considerable effort to participate and contribute to country data for indicator two. They did so with different approaches and sometimes mixed results (as documented by the forthcoming Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment’s stocktaking in 11 sample countries).

31. However, much more work needs to be done to improve the overall multi-stakeholder character of the monitoring process beyond engagement in a final country validation exercise. The MAG has also recommended that a number of the indicators develop a more inclusive methodology (for example, indicator one on results, indicator eight on gender equality). The Global Partnership can test and scale up multi-stakeholder approaches itself as a working example of the opportunities and challenges of these approaches for delivering on the SDGs.

#### **d) Transparency and accountability for effective development (Indicators 4, 6, 7 and 8)**

##### **Transparency (Indicator Four)**

32. The Progress Report puts the principle of transparency and accountability at the center of the Busan Partnership agreement. Access to timely and relevant information is essential for governments to plan and manage their resources for development. Transparency enables “citizens and civil society to formulate their priorities, and to hold public officials and development partners accountable for their performance on their commitments.” (100)
33. The Report acknowledges correctly that a common standard for transparency based on the DAC reporting platform (CRS) and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) is not practical. These platforms have been designed to meet different needs and audiences and are therefore not directly comparable. In reviewing provider performance in each of three transparency platforms (CRS, IATI and the Forward Spending Survey), the Report documents significant progress across these platforms in making information on development cooperation publicly available, which is both timely and comprehensive.
34. While welcoming this progress, the Report also concludes that more work is required on overcoming the challenges in setting out forward-looking data (as also suggested by indicator 5b). It points to a number of important policies and processes that need to be in place to institutionalize a culture of transparency and respond to the reporting needs in development partnerships (105 -106).
35. On a final note, the Report observes that “as the quantity and quality of information improve, more attention will need to be given to improving the use of the information by supporting the availability of data at the country level.” (106) This is indeed a serious impediment for both developing country governments in accessing timely and relevant information and for non-state actors (CSOs, parliamentarians, local government) in assessing aid flows and holding stakeholders to account for their commitments. As the MAG noted in its final report, the current methodology for indicator 4 only focuses on the supply side, measuring the availability of data on development cooperation published at the global level. The MAG has suggested the need for revisions to this methodology to better capture the degree to which relevant, timely, accurate data is accessible at the country level as well as the availability and ease of access to this data on open accessible platforms (particularly for IATI data).

##### **Development cooperation is on budgets that are subject to parliamentary oversight (Indicator Six)**

36. The Report notes the important role of parliament in strengthening accountability for effective development cooperation. Indicator 6 measures the degree to which development cooperation funds are included in the national budget and subject to parliamentary scrutiny. There has been good progress with two thirds of development cooperation intended for the public sector



reported to be including in national budgets. More progress in this area is linked to investments in information management systems from which to draw accurate information in budget preparations, more timely forward projections of aid from providers, and greater use of country systems.

37. While all these areas require attention to improve the linkages between development cooperation resources and national budgets, progress in budget transparency, an issue not directly covered by this indicator, is also essential for public transparency and accountability. The Open Budget Initiative (OBI) and its Open Budget Survey tracks whether governments give the public access to budget information and opportunities to participate in the budget process at the national level.<sup>4</sup> This indicator should consider these issues.

38. In 2015, OBI reported improvements in budget transparency and accountability, particularly over a medium term time horizon, with individual countries' scores on average increasing by 10 points over their scores from the first year they joined the Survey. Many of these countries, however, started from a very low base. Among the summary conclusions from the 2015 Survey were the following:<sup>5</sup>

- In the vast majority of countries assessed, there is either insufficient budget transparency, little or no opportunities for public participation in budgeting, weak formal oversight bodies, or some combination of these conditions.
- Seventy-eight of 102 countries assessed fail to provide sufficient information to the public on their national budgets
- Most countries currently provide few opportunities for the public to participate in budget processes. Among the countries surveyed in 2015, the average score for participation is just 25 out of 100. This suggests that meaningful channels for the public to engage in the formal budget process simply do not exist in the vast majority of countries.
- In more than half of the countries assessed, legislatures do not have the number of skilled staff needed to analyze the budget; in some cases, the legislature has no such staff.

While further improvements are needed in the budgeting systems and technical management of development cooperation information, as suggested by the Progress Report, without progress in budget transparency and accountability in these processes, putting aid on budget may not achieve its intended goals with respect to parliamentary and accountability to citizens.

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<sup>4</sup> See the International Budget Partnership at <http://www.internationalbudget.org/opening-budgets/open-budget-initiative/>.

<sup>5</sup> Open Budget Survey 2015 Key Findings, accessed November 2016 at <http://www.internationalbudget.org/opening-budgets/open-budget-initiative/open-budget-survey/publications-2/rankings-key-findings/key-findings/>.

### **Gender equality and women's empowerment (Indicator Eight)**

39. The premise of indicator eight is that the creation and implementation of national budget tracking systems for gender equality and women's rights is a basis for ensuring that resources are mobilized and allocated effectively to achieve these goals. The Report suggests that these systems are critical for promoting the government's accountability towards SDG Five on gender equality and women's empowerment. (112) While raising substantive qualifications relating to the actual content of gender related programming, the MAG agreed that gender budget tracking is a good indicator and a starting point for discussion with stakeholders.
40. The Report suggests that increasing numbers of countries "have systems in place to track budget allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment." (113) However, the indicator measure of this progress is quite weak: to receive a positive score, a country only need to have one of an official government statement on a tracking system, leadership by a central government unit (e.g. women's bureau), or a system where allocations are systematically tracked.
41. While 72% of countries report they have in place one of these three elements, only 33 countries out of 81 (41%) actually reported that they have a system in place. The Report does note that countries "frequently report encountering challenges in moving from formulation of gender-responsive policy, law or strategies to the systematic tracking of gender equality allocations." (113)
42. The MAG considered this indicator to be highly relevant, but advised that there be more focused attention on the challenges in implementing gender budget tracking (in part addressed in the Report). They propose that the methodology for the indicator be more inclusive in bringing women's rights organizations to the table to assess the quality of policy and budget tracking. There is also a recommendation that the indicator include an assessment of aid providers' disbursements for gender equality, strengthening the current DAC gender policy marker system to track actual allocations in projects marked as 'significant contributions to gender equality', drawing on UNDP experience in this area.

### **Mutual accountability (Indicator Seven)**

43. The MAG proposed that mutual accountability be elevated to an overarching indicator, which they consider a process and incentive to change that should reflect all dimensions of efforts to achieving behaviour and policy change for effective development cooperation. It is therefore somewhat disappointing to see this indicator appearing as the final indicator for the fourth principle at the end of the Progress Report.
44. Mutual accountability has been part of the Paris agenda reaffirmed by Busan in 2011. After 10 years it is discouraging to find that less than half (46%) of the 81 countries undertook mutual reviews to track progress on commitments and targets for development cooperation. Even fewer countries (44%) make the results of these reviews publically available. (115)

45. Mutual accountability mechanisms are far from inclusive. Less than half (47%) are multi-stakeholder in character involving local governments and non-executive stakeholders in the processes. (116)
46. The Report references the work of the UN's Development Cooperation Forum documenting issues that affect the quality of mutual accountability fora as well as limited inclusion of non-state actors throughout the development co-operation process. (117) They make relevant suggestions for improving practice; however, the focus is largely on what developing country partners can do to lead and promote accountability. The MAG has suggested a more balanced approach with the indicator questions applied also to providers to tease out reasons for challenges for providers in meeting their Busan commitments. (MAG, Annex Six, 41)

### **C. Conclusion**

47. The Progress Report offers a substantial update on many of the critical commitments and outstanding issues for realizing more effective development co-operation. But many of these issues remain buried in the detailed text of the Report, and several unfortunately lie outside the scope of the current methodology. They need to be more sharply highlighted if they are to serve as the foundation for dialogue and learning within the GPEDC at all levels, and particularly at the country level.
48. Post-Nairobi, the GPEDC should review the outcomes of the second monitoring round, the current presentation of the data and information derived from this round, and proposals for revising this monitoring framework from the MAG and other stakeholders. This work is urgent if the monitoring process, including its Progress Report, is to play a central role in the GPEDC's theory of change and renewed mandate. This work is also vital given the importance of effective development cooperation at the country level for the realization of country specific SDGs and Agenda 2030.