

Development Effectiveness & the Role of Civil Society Organisations

As a result of numerous changes in the world the development community is no longer talking about aid effectiveness, but about development effectiveness.

The key role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in addressing this paradigm shift, to which they also contributed, is to focus on poverty reduction and factors affecting development such as human rights, participatory democracy, social and environmental justice, sustainability and gender equality. CSOs engage in development effectiveness in many important ways. Firstly, CSOs monitor the actions of donors and other actors in development and play the 'watchdog' role. Secondly, they shape the global agenda of development effectiveness by participating in multi-stakeholder discussions. Thirdly, CSOs make sure their actions reflect the internationally agreed principles of development effectiveness. This policy digest will look more closely how CSOs can act in these roles in order to enhance development effectiveness.

What is Development Effectiveness and why is it important?

Although the concept of development effectiveness does not have an agreed definition, the CSOs understand that it promotes sustainable change that addresses the causes as well as the symptoms of poverty, inequality and marginalization, through the

use of diverse and complementary instruments, policies and actors.

Some of the changes and challenges that contributed to the paradigm shift were that donor states' aid contributions fell short of the desired official development assistance (ODA) levels; a range of new donors surfaced on the aid-development nexus (including the private sector and emerging donors such as the BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa). Because these 'emerging' donors operate outside the framework of the common aid architecture, we can no longer talk about aid effectiveness as the mere effort of donor governments. The new aid portfolio includes non-traditional donors and a range of new tools that cannot be characterized as aid, but rather as tools for economic and social development.

What kind of aid and development effectiveness standards have governments agreed to?

The aid effectiveness agenda has changed since the **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs) were agreed upon (2000), up until 2011 when the 4th High Level Forum (HLF) on Aid Effectiveness took place in Busan, South Korea. Agreeing on the MDGs was the first global effort to unite donors under eight development

goals. The implementation process of the MDGs brought about a number of concerns in terms of how to coordinate and harmonize efforts of donors and recipients of aid. The **principles of cooperation** were formulated during a number of international forums, such as the 2002 United Nations (UN) International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico. The Monterrey Consensus established commitments to **increase the volume and quality** of foreign aid to finance the MDGs. After that the evidence showed, however, that the increased levels of aid did not yield expected results in poverty reduction or economic performance¹, and there was a serious need to increase the effectiveness of available aid resources.

The first event to focus on the **harmonization of aid** among donors and between donors and recipients to reduce financial waste due to incoherent approaches was held in Rome in 2003. Rome, or later named the 1st HLF on Aid Effectiveness raised awareness and paved the way for future commitments.

The Paris Declaration (2005) or the 2nd HLF provided an action-oriented roadmap and defined **five principles of aid effectiveness**, to which its signatories (recipient governments and donors) committed: ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability². The Paris Declaration was broadly criticized by CSOs, because it failed to link aid processes to development goals and it had a narrow focus on government-to-government partnership excluding CSOs from the development process³.

In 2008 in Accra during the 3rd HLF a broad range of stakeholders raised their concerns about the unfulfilled commitments of the Paris Declaration claiming the broader use of country delivery systems, and more predictable and untied aid⁴ resources⁵. The Accra Agenda for Action expanded the concept of ownership, engaged other development stakeholders (CSOs and private sector), recognized CSOs for the first time as independent development actors in their own right.⁶

¹ Atwood, B. (2012) "Creating a Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation".

² Read more about the five principles of aid effectiveness from: <http://www.oecd.org/development/effectiveness/34428351.pdf>

³ Kindornay, S. (2011) "From aid to development effectiveness".

⁴ Untied aid is ODA that is free of conditionality on the purchase of goods and services from the donor country.

⁵ Kim & Lee, (2013) "Busan and Beyond: South Korea and the transition from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness".

⁶ Read more about commitments made at the HLFs from: Oxfam International, (2012) "Busan in a Nutshell. What next for the

What are the latest development effectiveness commitments made in Busan?

The stakeholders in development raised concerns in three different dimensions of aid during the 4th HLF held in Busan in 2011⁷. First, there was a need to shift the focus from aid management to development **outcomes** in addressing poverty. Second, the aid architecture had to be expanded to **new actors** outside of the OECD-led processes. Third, as the developing countries' growth potential depends on various factors such as trade, investment, security and immigration, the paradigm shift from aid to development has to consider the **consistency and coherence across all these policies**.⁸

Busan established the **Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation** (GPEDC), which brings together a wide range of stakeholders like governments, private sector, civil society and others to ensure funding, time and knowledge to produce maximum impact for development. The GPEDC made strong commitments to accelerate efforts to **untie aid** and develop **common publishing standards for aid data**⁹. It also committed alongside better **predictable aid** resources, and to use country-led initiatives and delivery systems more effectively.

The aid community should consider Busan outcome as a half success. On the one hand, a partial paradigm-shift was made towards development effectiveness as the role of development cooperation was re-positioned being more inclusive and participatory. On the other hand, the outcome document was too much focused on the delivery mechanisms of aid rather than the development outcome of aid.

What are governments planning concerning development effectiveness in 2014 and beyond and how can CSOs hold their governments accountable?

After the relatively slow progress in implementing the Busan commitments so far, 2014 will hopefully accelerate the process by bringing together the first **High Level Meeting of the Global Partnership on Effective Development Cooperation** (so called "ministerial meeting") that will be held on 15-16 April

Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation?" and Tomlinson, B. (2012) "CSOs on the Road from Accra to Busan. CSO Initiatives to Strengthen Development Effectiveness".

⁷ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/49650173.pdf>

⁸ Kim & Lee, (2013); Kindornay, (2011)

⁹ OECD, (2012) "What is the common standard for aid information?"

2014 in Mexico. This meeting will assess the global progress in implementing the Busan commitments and its monitoring framework. The European Union (EU), who is a member of the Steering Committee of the GPEDC, is taking active role in two of the five focus areas of the Mexico meeting. These two areas are related to reviewing the **implementation of the Busan commitments** and inclusive development, mobilization and collection of **tax and domestic resources in developing countries**. European CSOs have an important role to play during this process as they are part of the GPEDC steering committee through the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness that will be explained below.

The Mexico meeting will also define in concrete terms the role of GPEDC and thus development effectiveness in the **post-2015 agenda**. Therefore the UN work streams leading up to the 69th UN General Assembly in September 2014 should also be closely monitored by CSOs.

The EU will also further assess its progress in development effectiveness through the **EU study on progress since Busan** published ahead of Mexico meeting and the **EU Accountability Report** that is expected to be published in July 2014¹⁰. All these processes are important opportunities for CSOs to play the watchdog role and monitor the governments' performance in implementing their commitments and to influence them to take further steps towards development effectiveness.

Are governments on track with implementing their commitments?

All governments in Europe have signed up to the Busan Principles and have made general commitments to implement them. The **EU-13 governments**¹¹ as well should make further progress regarding the development of concrete implementation plans for meeting the Busan commitments since none of these countries has adopted one till now. In these plans special focus has to be given to transparency and monitoring of the implementation plans.

The only area for which information is available on achievements of the EU-13 governments at the moment is transparency. Out of the 13 countries only four (Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia) have published their implementation schedule for the

common reporting standard on the OECD website¹². Some of these published schedules are either incomplete or not ambitious enough, meaning that there is still room for improvement.¹³

The CSOs have a role to advocate their governments to develop these Busan implementation plans as soon as possible and to ensure the countries comply with the common standard for transparency by 31 December 2015. In the advocacy works CSOs can also use a series of recommendations in the recent AidWatch Report of the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development CONCORD that focuses on the unique role of aid and development effectiveness¹⁴.

What have CSOs done themselves to enhance their development effectiveness?

Acknowledging not only their contributions, but also their weaknesses and challenges as development actors, CSOs have taken on the challenge to proactively improve their work and be fully accountable for their development practices and results. From 2009 to 2012, thousands of CSOs worldwide carried out a consultation process within the **Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness** on the standards that guide CSOs in development. The outcome of this process was the **International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness** which is the common statement from global civil society on the effectiveness of its work in development¹⁵. This framework includes the so called **Istanbul Principles**¹⁶ and minimum criteria for enabling environment for civil society (more favourable governments' and donors' policies and practices).

The Istanbul Principles are essential principles that define and guide change for effective development practice by CSOs worldwide. Together with the International Framework, they were officially acknowledged by the Global Partnership in the 4th HLF in Busan and were thus given global legitimacy. The eight principles are the following:

- Respect and promote social justice
- Embody gender and equity while promoting women and girls' rights

¹⁰ Read the previous years' EU Accountability Report here: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/development-policies/financing_for_development/

¹¹ The 13 countries that joined the EU since 2004.

¹² <http://www.oecd.org/dac/aid-architecture/acommonstandard.htm>

¹³ <http://tracker.publishwhatyoufund.org/plan/organisations/>

¹⁴ "The Unique Role of Aid. The fight against global poverty", CONCORD AidWatch Report 2013.

¹⁵ <http://cso-effectiveness.org/InternationalFramework?lang=en>

¹⁶ <http://cso-effectiveness.org/istanbul-principles,067?lang=en>

- Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation
- Promote environmental sustainability
- Practice transparency and accountability
- Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity
- Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning
- Commit to realizing positive sustainable change



Another initiative called the **BetterAid** platform¹⁷ (2008 – 2012) came together in order to monitor and influence international agreements on development cooperation while broadening the policy agenda from aid effectiveness towards development effectiveness. In both initiatives, the European CSOs, including those from EU-13, were engaged through CONCORD.

What is the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE)?

As an outcome of the Busan Partnership, these two big CSO initiatives (the BetterAid and Open Forum) merged in the new key global CSO platform – **CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE)**¹⁸ – at the end of 2012. The CPDE represents CSOs from all regions and sub-regions of the world and includes representatives from different sectors of civil society, such as faith-based, feminist, labour, rural sectors, and international CSOs. This new platform is finalizing the process of setting its bodies, tools and mechanisms for cooperation. The ultimate decision-making and representative body of the platform is the Global Council where the **EU sub-region** is represented by a representative of the Czech NGDO platform FoRS.

CPDE is the first global CSO platform that is not led by “big Northern CSOs” and that represents also small CSOs through their national and regional platforms. It is also the first time when a global CSO platform is directly involved in decision-making with donors, partner countries’ governments and other

stakeholders in the negotiations and discussions of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, the European Commission’s Policy Forum for Development, the UN Development Cooperation Forum and the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda. This direct involvement in these important processes is based on previous experiences of CSO inclusion that represented a meaningful shift in power relations towards multi-stakeholder civil society diplomacy.

Several **working groups** (WGs) of the CPDE have been established in order to provide technical and expert opinion to the platform around some of its core issues. These WGs are: CSO Enabling Environment, CSO Development Effectiveness, Human Rights-Based Approach, South-South Cooperation, Post-2015 Agenda, Effective institutions, Advocacy and Private sector. The WGs are open to everyone who is interested in joining but the CSOs who are interested must be endorsed by their sub-region, region or sector¹⁹.

How are the CSOs represented in Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation?

The CPDE represents the voices of CSOs in the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. For the first time, CSOs are officially represented by the CPDE as an executive member and member of the Steering Committee in an official body of this nature.

This CPDE is also actively involved in the priority strands of work of the GPEDC leading to the upcoming ministerial meeting²⁰ and is represented in the multi-stakeholder (incl. donors, partner countries and CSOs) **Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment**. In addition, the WG of the CPDE on Enabling Environment developed evidence and case studies to help to assess progress and good practice in advancing an enabling environment for CSOs.

¹⁹ The membership in the WG and in CPDE is both organisational and individual, therefore a letter of intent from a given organisation stating the organisation's interest to engage in a particular WG and stating the organisation's representative is required, as well as an endorsement letter from the CPDE Regional Representative.

<http://www.csopartnership.org/influence/cso-partnership-working-groups>.

²⁰ GPEDC Summary of the First Meeting of the Steering Committee, London, 5-6 December 2012, http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/20130114_summary_-_gp_steering_committee_5-6dec12.pdf

¹⁷ <http://www.betteraid.org/>

¹⁸ <http://www.csopartnership.org/>

Besides usual communication tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube channel and a newsletter, CSOs can get involved in the occasional e-discussions of the GPEDC. The first series took place in September and October 2013 as part of a broader proposal for longer term online stakeholder engagement in the preparations to the first ministerial meeting of the GPEDC.

How to implement the Istanbul Principles?

CSOs from around the globe, joined now in the CPDE, have committed themselves to becoming better agents of development change. Within the Busan Partnership, CSOs have re-confirmed their commitment to improve their effectiveness, in particular to following the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness and the Istanbul Principles. A number of toolkits have been developed by the Open Forum (and can be found on its website www.cso-effectiveness.org) and other actors to help CSOs worldwide to implement the Principles within their organisations and, by doing so, to improve their own effectiveness:

- **The Implementation toolkit** is a manual for implementing the Principles in the context of an organisation.
- **The Practitioners' Activity Guide** will help you to reflect on organisation's effectiveness and on ways to improve it.
- **The Advocacy Toolkit** will help to advocate for a more enabling environment for CSOs.
- **CSO Development Effectiveness Wiki** is a tool for sharing good practices among CSOs.
- **Trainings for trainers** on implementation of the

Istanbul Principles were organized by the CPDE and further trainings can be provided.

- The CONCORD Working Group on CSO Development Effectiveness encourages **peer learning** among European national platforms and their members.



What can I do?

- (-) Ask your government to publish the implementation strategy for Busan commitments and to advance with their implementation.
- (-) Ask your government to implement the common standards on transparency and join the IAITI initiative if they have not done so already.
- (-) Join the CONCORD AidWatch campaign.
- (-) Implement the Istanbul principles in your organisation and promote them in your country.
- (-) Join the working group on CSO Development Effectiveness of CONCORD.
- (-) Engage actively in the working groups of the new CSO global platform CPDE.

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