



Conference note 4

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# Where next for development effectiveness?

## Leaving no one behind

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## 1. Introduction

The 2030 sustainable development agenda states that ‘as we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognising that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the Goals and targets met for all nations and peoples, and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.’ This new ‘leave no one behind’ (LNOB) approach implies that international development goals, including ending extreme poverty, should be met not just by some groups in some countries, but by all people everywhere. This represents a change from the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) era, which focused on aggregate or average progress.

This note is part of a series of papers to inform the debate in the run-up to the Second High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) in Nairobi in November 2016. It explores whether and how the LNOB agenda requires a change in approach to development effectiveness. The current agenda, as set out in the Paris, Accra and Busan Declarations, was designed for the MDG era. It emphasises large-scale service delivery according to plans developed by central governments, supported by either budget/sector support or projects harmonised with other donors. Principles, commitments, indicators and targets for development effectiveness have been designed to encourage donors and partner countries to adopt this approach. There is limited consideration within the Busan Partnership Agreement of the specific needs of vulnerable groups or countries, although the needs of fragile states have been reflected in the subsequent New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.

In this conference note, we first briefly outline who is being left behind and how this is likely to change up to 2030. We then examine each of the four Busan Principles in turn, asking how relevant they – and the associated commitments and indicators – are for the LNOB agenda, and how they need to be updated for the new goals.

### Who is being left behind and where are they living?

The analysis of current and likely future trends in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) attainment, including extreme poverty, suggests that the following groups are being, or are at risk of being, left behind.

- **People living in fragile states and/or in sub-Saharan Africa.** Poverty has fallen rapidly since 1990 in most regions of the world, but the absolute number of

people living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa has risen, and this trend is expected to accelerate up to 2030. Fragile states, many of which are also in sub-Saharan Africa, are expected to account for between two thirds and three quarters of extremely poor people by 2030 (Greenhill et al., 2015).

- **Vulnerable or marginalised groups** living in all developing countries, including women and girls, old and young people, ethnic minorities, those in rural areas, disabled people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and other marginalised groups. Although this varies by context and across countries and regions, the evidence suggests that it is members of these groups who tend to be left behind: 78% of those living in income poverty are in rural areas (Olinot et al., 2013), while 68%-72% are from ethnic minorities (Sumner, 2013).<sup>2</sup> Similar trends apply when looking at specific SDGs: for example, education poverty is 12 percentage points higher in rural than in urban areas, and 7 percentage points higher among young women than young men (Samman and Lynch, forthcoming). Those suffering from multiple forms of disadvantage – such as women from ethnic minorities – are particularly likely to be left behind (Lenhardt and Samman, 2015).

Development effectiveness from an LNOB perspective will mean both focusing specifically on fragile and conflict-affected states and considering how development cooperation can support vulnerable and marginalised groups in all countries. In some countries, such groups account for more than half the population, including Liberia, Malawi and Mozambique (Stuart et al., 2016).

## 2. Development effectiveness to leave no one behind

### Ownership of development priorities by developing countries

There are two ways in which ownership could come into tension with the LNOB agenda. The first occurs when governments themselves do not prioritise, or even actively marginalise, particular groups. The second is in fragile or conflict-affected states, when governments may appear unable or unwilling to lead the development agenda.

Not all governments prioritise the needs of all vulnerable groups, and some have legal or constitutional provisions that actively discriminate against particular

groups. Currently, 75 countries criminalise same-sex sexual acts between consenting adults (ILGA, 2015), and 52 do not have constitutional provisions to guarantee gender equality (UN Women, 2016). Some do not even recognise some groups as marginalised: an ODI study of 39 countries (Stuart et al., 2016) found that while all national development plans recognised some groups as marginalised, only 67% recognised people living with HIV/AIDS, 56% ethnic minorities and/or indigenous people and 15% LGBT people as marginalised.

Focusing entirely on ownership and alignment behind government-owned plans is unlikely to be effective in these cases. A two-track approach is needed: engaging governments in pro-equity policy dialogue and challenging discrimination and structural barriers to empowerment on one side; and working to support empowerment of the marginalised, build the capacity of civil society and support decentralised levels of government on the other (Tucker and Ludi, 2012). This can include working with and funding less accessible and organised civic groups (O’Neil, 2016). Other recommendations include supporting human rights bodies, building the capacity of advocacy organisations, running projects to strengthen the independent media, and supporting political debate around issues such as land reform and social services, which provide opportunities for new alliances to be formed across conflicting identities (Latto, 2002). However, solutions must be locally owned and driven, even if not by central government: external actors must support change that is led by local stakeholders, not by external funders (O’Neil, 2016).

In fragile states, the emphasis should be on developing state institutions: external support that fails to respect ownership by avoiding these institutions can actually exacerbate fragility in the long run, particularly if it fails to make the long-term investments that are required for institutional development to take root (OECD, 2014). The messages of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, on the need to put countries in the lead on their own pathways out of fragility, remain very relevant. Experience suggests that external actors can play an integral role in fostering genuine change in such contexts, but again they need to do this by addressing local problems and adapting solutions to them, rather than starting with comprehensive, ex ante planned reforms (Williamson, 2015).

Some of those left behind are in countries that are actively in conflict, or are refugees from such conflicts. These groups are likely to be supported by humanitarian assistance, which is not currently covered by the Busan Principles or monitoring framework. Yet many of the same principles – such as the need to support local actors and

local ownership – apply in these contexts too (Svoboda and Pantuliano, 2015).

## Recommendations

- **Continue to focus on country rather than government ownership, and expand ownership beyond central government to include local actors. Maintain Busan target 2** on maximising civil society’s ‘engagement in and contribution to development’ and deliver the ‘preliminary assessment of civil society organisation (CSO) Enabling Environment building on qualitative, multi-stakeholder information’.
- **Include commitments and indicators on improving the effectiveness of development cooperation for sub-national governments, parliaments, CSOs and other non-governmental partners.**<sup>3</sup> Currently, the monitoring indicators only cover aid to the government sector. The Nairobi meeting needs to commit to developing a new development effectiveness framework for support to non-governmental actors and to support locally driven and politically smart action.
- **Expand Busan target 8, on systems to track and make public resource allocations to gender equality and women’s empowerment, to cover all relevant and potentially vulnerable groups.**
- **Include specific commitments to implement the ‘New Deal’ provisions on country-led and country-owned transitions out of fragility, in a flexible, problem driven and locally owned way.**
- **Expand the development effectiveness agenda to humanitarian and emergency assistance.** When dealing with refugees and people affected by conflict, the Busan principles currently do not apply, as they exclude humanitarian and emergency assistance. This should be rectified in the Nairobi Declaration.

## Focus on results

An LNOB lens on the results agenda would require national development strategies and sector plans to include goals and targets that are disaggregated by group, including by gender, location, disability, ethnicity, income, age or other group as relevant (Development Initiatives, 2016). Strategies could also include ‘stepping stone’ targets, to reduce gaps in progress between different groups. For example, targets could be set which halve the death rate gap between the richest and poorest children, or narrow learning gaps between rural girls and urban boys (Watkins, 2014, cited in Save the Children, 2014).

A thorough review of country results frameworks is outside the scope of this paper, but initial research suggests that few do disaggregate by groups or include stepping

stone targets. In Nepal, for example, even though ‘equitable access’ is one of the four principles in the National Health Sector Strategy, and specific groups are identified and targeted, the results framework has almost no indicators disaggregated by gender, disability, ethnicity, religion or sexual minority<sup>4</sup> (Government of Nepal, 2015). However, it will be important to ensure that data disaggregation does not become an additional burden on countries. Therefore, the Nairobi Declaration should include commitments on better data disaggregation by countries and better support and capacity-building from external partners, as already set out in SDG target 17.18.

For fragile states, there also needs to be a focus on long-term rather than short-term results. Working in fragile states, and with marginalised groups in more stable contexts, will take time and involve more risk. Fragile states often need to develop institutional capacity: a very long-term process, often taking decades. Expectations of international partners have, to date, been unrealistic and failed to recognise the time taken to build institutions (Pritchett and de Weijer, 2010; World Bank, 2011). The evidence suggests that ‘quick impact projects’, rather than creating institutional capacity, ‘can become an instrument for division, resentment and corruption’ (Ghani and Lockhart, 2008). This does not, however, mean that short-term changes should not also be prioritised and tracked.

Finally, the Busan Principles have no provision for risk-sharing, which will be particularly important in fragile states contexts. Development cooperation providers need to take a portfolio view and recognise that failure comes with the territory. They need to balance programmatic risks (e.g. project failure, harming) with fiduciary risks (OECD, 2014; Greenhill et al., 2015). A focus on results in the Nairobi Declaration needs to be combined with a recognition that working in fragile states involves taking more risks, and that both providers and governments need to take steps to be able to manage and share such risks.

## Recommendations

- **All countries should commit to disaggregating their results frameworks**, to the extent possible, by group (based on their own locally specific vulnerable groups), and external partners should commit to supporting them in doing so and in collecting the necessary data, in line with SDG target 17.18. There is a precedent in this area in the form of the 2030 Agenda, in which countries have called for a follow-up and review process based on data that is ‘disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts’.

- **All development actors should focus on long-term rather than short-term results.**
- **Both providers and recipients of development cooperation should commit to better manage and share risk** and to encourage experimentation. The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States includes that partners ‘accept the risk of engaging during transition, recognising that the risk of non-engagement in this context can outweigh most risks of engagement’, and this or similar language should be incorporated in the Nairobi Declaration.

## Inclusive development partnerships

An ODI review of countries that have made significant progress in addressing intersecting inequalities revealed that key factors included social movements that demand changes in the ‘rules of the game’ and greater political partnership (Paz Arauco et al., 2014). This suggests that partnerships have a crucial role in the LNOB agenda. The phrase ‘nothing about us, without us’, first used by disability activists, is equally relevant to the whole LNOB debate. As an example, in northern Ghana, efforts to provide economic opportunities for poor groups, especially women, have been unsuccessful as they have not reflected the aspirations and participation of those groups. The programme is working with women’s and other local groups to improve women’s representation and participation in local government (Christian Aid, 2015).

However, the Busan Declaration contains no specific commitments on partnerships or indicators to monitor progress. This makes it difficult to assess how an LNOB lens should be applied to partnerships.

An obvious commitment for the Nairobi Declaration would be that partnerships should always include representatives from vulnerable and marginalised groups. A good example in this respect is the ‘Stop TB Partnership’, which involves groups including NGOs and community groups, as well as international and technical organisations, government, funding agencies and private and philanthropic sectors. The Partnership has been praised for bringing together and coordinating the views and efforts of all relevant partners (Cambridge Economic Policy Associates, 2015).

## Recommendations

The Nairobi Declaration should include the following:

- A clear set of commitments, targets and indicators on partnerships.
- A clear commitment that partnerships to address those left behind should include representatives from left behind groups.

## Transparency and accountability to each other

The Busan Partnership Agreement on transparency and accountability includes commitments to ‘make the full range of information on publicly funded development activities ... publicly available’ and ‘focus, at the country level, on establishing transparent public financial management and aid information management systems, and strengthen the capacities of all relevant stakeholders to make better use of this information in decision-making and to promote accountability.’

These commitments focus on making information available, but not necessarily making it accessible to those left behind. Information published directly in the OECD’s Creditor Reporting System (CRS) or the IATI registry is likely to be in a form that is inaccessible to such groups. In the case of IATI, it is reported that even existing users (primarily development finance experts and partner governments) struggle to access the information published (Davies, 2015).

To increase the transparency levels to those left behind, it will be necessary to create new ways to distribute complex information and data such that it is understandable to non-specialists in general, and to those left behind in particular. As an example, in Uganda, a free budget hotline has been set up to give people the opportunity to ask questions about public spending.<sup>5</sup> A similar approach could be taken for flows from external partners. The GPEDC should encourage development assistance providers to do more to empower citizens and stakeholders with information.

Furthermore, the information made available under both IATI and the CRS is currently not disaggregated by group. The IATI standard also includes no specific LNOB commitments; for example, information is not broken down according to beneficiaries, and only a small proportion of the information published is geocoded in a way that would allow mapping of where those left behind are located, a feature that is voluntary in the IATI standard (Davies, 2015).

An opportunity exists for the GPEDC to strengthen links with the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD) to improve transparency, both about and to those left behind. The GPSDD aims to improve the effective use of data, fill key data gaps, expand data literacy and capacity, increase openness and leverage of existing data, and mobilise political will and resources, with a particular focus on the global goals, including LNOB. The GPEDC could commit to supporting the GPSDD and ensuring links between country-level and global transparency efforts.

Although there is a Busan principle on accountability, there are no specific commitments on how cooperation

providers could be more accountable to marginalised groups. The most relevant one is ‘as we deepen our efforts to ensure that mutual assessment reviews are in place in all developing countries, we encourage the active participation of all development cooperation actors in these processes’. This should be strengthened to include a specific commitment to include representatives of vulnerable groups in any mutual assessment review processes and to ensure that such processes reflect their priorities.

## Recommendations

- **The Nairobi Declaration should include a commitment to ensure that information made publicly available is accessible to those left behind**, including in local languages and in formats that can be readily understood, including by, for instance, illiterate populations. This should apply to information published by governments as well as that from development cooperation providers.
- **Information published under IATI or the CRS should be broken down by group.** For example, information about development activities and expected results should specify which groups are expected to benefit and whether any groups are expected to be adversely affected.
- **The GPEDC should commit to work with and support the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data.**
- **Mutual assessment reviews should include the participation of all stakeholders, including representatives of vulnerable and marginalised groups,** and assessments should include criteria that are important for such groups.

## 3. Conclusion

The SDGs will not be met if the poorest and most marginalised people continue to be left behind by progress and so the ‘leave no one behind’ agenda is rightly front and centre of international debate. The main responsibility to LNOB may lie with governments, but all actors will need to work together if progress is to accelerate to the degree needed. This means that partnerships – such as those discussed by the GPEDC – can and should play a crucial role.

This conference note has shown that all the existing GPEDC principles are relevant to the LNOB agenda, but may sometimes need to be operationalised in different ways. Ownership remains critical, including in fragile states, but needs to expand beyond national

governments: sometimes it is local CSOs, the private sector or local governments who need to ‘own’ development programmes. Results remain vital, but need to be disaggregated by group, and be both short and long term, especially in fragile states. Partnerships are important, and must put vulnerable groups front and centre. And finally, transparency remains as important as ever – but information must be both accessible to and include sufficient information about those left behind.

Bringing together the LNOB and development effectiveness agendas can offer the GPEDC a new purpose in implementing the SDGs, and the international community a set of guiding principles and experience on how to work more effectively together to truly reach the furthest behind first.

## Notes

- 1 This conference note was originally part of a commission by the ‘core group’ involved in organising Plenary 5 at the Nairobi High-Level Meeting, on development effectiveness and leave no one behind. It was generously funded by GIZ and co-authored by Cepei. We are presenting this section of the report at the 2016 CAPE Conference in order to inform the discussions of the group and the subsequent plenary. The current draft does not yet reflect the views of the ‘core group’ or GIZ.
- 2 See Greenhill et al. (2015) for a full analysis of people currently living in poverty and projected future trends.
- 3 This is separate from CSO efforts to improve their own effectiveness, as set out in the Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness principles.
- 4 Only wealth quintile, eco-region, the degree of earthquake impact and, for two indicators, ethnicity are considered.
- 5 See [budget.go.ug](http://budget.go.ug)



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