

THE PD EVALUATION SEMINAR ON 30.8.2011 IN HELSINKI

KEPA's comments by Timo Lappalainen

INTRODUCTION

The main finding of this evaluation report is that we are on the right track despite the differences in the degree of implementation and achievement of PD principles and commitments. I am sure this is a very welcome message in most if not all the donor countries for they have been under growing pressure from the general public which questions the relevance of their countries' efforts in the area of development cooperation and aid.

The evaluation also suggests that aid has become more effective; i.e. it has been more effectively used and it has produced more sustainable development results. However and for the same token, this report also acknowledges the fact that the significance of development aid has been largely exaggerated: sustainable development and poverty eradication that bring positive change and address not only the symptoms but also the reasons of poverty require the application of a wide range of other policy measures and actions. Hence, development cooperation alone is not enough. However, development cooperation has its own particular role to play in enabling and bringing about development. Perhaps the Paris Declaration campaign with its focus on improving aid effectiveness has also contributed to the process that seeks answers to some fundamental questions about what the receipt for sustainable development is and what role and added value development cooperation and aid could have.

ABOUT DONORS

The evaluation report states that the Paris Declaration commitments to donor countries were less demanding and, at the same time, the donors obviously were readier to deal with them. However, donors made less progress compared to partner countries.

Partner countries have come to realise this and have started asking serious questions about the level of commitments by donor countries: Are they serious about playing their part in this joint aid effectiveness agenda? For long the donor countries have claimed that the partner countries' lack of capacity and infrastructure prevent them from using the partner countries' systems or allowing them to take leadership. The progress partner countries are making will sooner or later lead into a situation where donor countries fall short of any further explanations on why they do not follow the Paris Declaration commitments on alignment, harmonisation and mutual accountability.

I think it is already pretty safe to say that we, the international community, will not achieve all the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015. When looking into the development agenda by 2015 and beyond, we may see many serious questions being asked: why did it not work out and more importantly, how are we to go ahead from here? I hope donors and partner countries will reclaim their commitment to work together in the fight against poverty and inequality because, quite frankly, there are no other sensible options. However, all this requires mutual trust and confidence in that each party plays its role. For this reason, the seeds of mutual trust are planted today. Donor countries must raise their game in meeting the Paris Declaration commitments they have made.

ABOUT PARTNERSHIP

The second and positive key finding of this evaluation report is that the Paris Declaration campaign

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has helped expand and deepen the dialogue about partnership, its content and principles, how and on which elements it has been or should be built. There are, however, a few critical remarks which have to be made in this context.

The concept of “ownership” requires some further elaboration in order to help address some fundamental questions about how to improve transparency and accountability and promote fundamental principles or values such as democracy, human rights and good governance. In 2008 in Accra, the signatories of the Accra Agenda for Action acknowledged the significant role of CSOs and how the civil society helps build a solid foundation for any these aforementioned principles and values. Given the scope and methodology, it is a bit unfortunate that this evaluation report cannot deal with the difference between the ownership of states and people. The main critical point the CSOs around the world have made with reference to the Paris Declaration is that the declaration focuses too narrowly on state-to-state relationships.

One of the report's findings is that the most marginalised groups of people have not benefited from the progress made in partner countries. How could they have been able to do so when their voices and needs are not heard in national strategy planning and implementation processes? Despite the acknowledgement of CSOs in the Accra resolution in 2008, the space for CSOs in partner and some donor countries have been reduced.

The concept of democratic ownership and consequently the need to provide an enabling environment for CSOs are hopefully adopted in the agenda of the Paris Declaration campaign sooner or later. At the same time, donor countries have to face the question of policy conditionalities: How can values and principles such as human rights, democracy and good governance be placed in the centre of the PD campaign in order to ensure the most effective use of aid in the future? Here also lies a massive challenge: How does the concept of democratic ownership pass the same test the Paris Declaration principles and commitments have passed; i.e. that the governments of partners find it sensible and serving the needs of their people and nation.

CLOSING REMARKS

The report clearly states that expectations to have achieved the PD commitments in five years were unrealistic. This does not mean that they have been bad commitments but that their implementation and completion requires patience and time. The PD has made something of a difference and there has also been progress across the board, although uneven. Therefore, the PD campaign has to continue. It is also important to stress that it has to foster its two-layer architecture; the implementation and coordination of actions at a country level and policy dialogue and peer reviews at the international level. There cannot be one without the other if one seeks the realisation of the full potential of the PD campaign.

On the way to Busan, one must address some fundamental questions related to the future architecture of the development cooperation agenda. Should the OECD be the venue for the coordination and monitoring of aid effectiveness principles and governed by norms, incentives and binding agreements, whereas the UN and DCF could be the right forum for high-level and inclusive policy dialogue?