

Upholding Accountability, Building Solidarity for Effective, People-Centred Development

CPDE Policy Conference
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Beirut, Lebanon

We, members of the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) representing diverse regions and sectors – Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, and the Pacific, faith-based organisations, feminist constituency, indigenous peoples, international civil society organisations, migrants and diaspora, rural constituency, labour, and the youth – gathered on 27 February 2019 in Beirut, Lebanon, to call on all development stakeholders to uphold effective development cooperation (EDC) commitments, reverse the trend of shrinking and closing civic spaces, and address the issue of sustainable development agenda being driven by corporate interests. We identified the use of official development assistance (ODA) for military and security interests, and the development effectiveness of humanitarian aid and of climate finance as important concerns in development cooperation.

We reaffirm the importance of EDC as a means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to leave no one behind, and to combat long-standing issues of poverty, marginalisation, and inequality within and between countries, and between men and women. CPDE, as the global platform of CSOs working in this arena, asserts that EDC must be rooted in the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and championed by all development actors, particularly States and the private sector. Unfortunately, efforts to promote and implement this agenda, and the development effectiveness (DE) principles that underpin it, have faced serious challenges at all levels.

Within the development community, there is a disproportionate tendency to encourage and ensure an increased role of private sector in development policies, partnerships, and programmes. We are especially concerned that international public finance, particularly ODA, is being used to leverage private investments, as opposed to directly focusing on development goals with the expressed purpose of eliminating poverty and inequality.

A development agenda driven by corporate interests has allowed States to abandon their obligations to uphold people's rights and welfare. Contrary to ensuring people-centred development, development driven by corporate interests and profit above all has often led to violation of human rights especially women's rights, as well as massive displacement of peoples and communities, environmental degradation, decreased resources for social services, policy and economic conditionalities, and erosion of genuine development partnerships and development cooperation.

Not coincidentally, the enabling environment for CSOs, a core tenet of DE, has faced significant barriers at all levels, from national to global. Despite recognition of CSOs' role in development, the reality is that civic space is shrinking and in some instances, even closing entirely. CSO evidence suggests that legal, structural, political, financial, and systemic factors are hindering effective and inclusive partnerships. CSOs have been subject to various forms of rights violations, oppression, and violence, which infringe on their ability to exist and operate openly, and to contribute to the democratic development process.

We further argue that such democratic development process cannot take place without peace, security, and political stability. Thus, immediate measures are necessary to support fragile states and nations in conflicts to end violence and atrocities instigating death, casualties, displacement, and mass destruction. In this light, we express utmost concern over the apparent use of aid for military and security interests and, relatedly, of the instrumentalisation of ODA by political and corporate actors. This redefinition of aid, coupled with the trend of shrinking civic spaces and the increased promotion of the role of private sector in development, points towards a shift to a development paradigm that is more focused on security and corporatisation, rather than human rights (HR).

Finally, we emphasise the great importance of the need to apply DE principles to humanitarian aid and climate finance. CPDE aims to develop and increase its understanding of these two areas of work.

With this context, we commit to improving CPDE's work and advocating for EDC and the realisation of Agenda 2030 by:

- a. Reaffirming the important role of EDC in addressing long-standing social issues such as poverty, marginalisation, and inequality. In relation to this, we also reiterate that the fulfilment of DE is critical to the achievement of the SDGs
- b. Advocating for the rights-based application of DE principles in all development levels, and upholding the accountability of all development actors to their EDC commitments
- c. Building solidarity and alliances with CSOs and other development actors in advancing DE
- d. Advancing the rights of the marginalised peoples
- e. Ensuring adherence to DE principles, accountability, and human rights standards for private sector involved and leveraged in development cooperation to realise SDGs
- f. Confronting the shrinking of civic space and continuing to advocate for an enabling environment for CSOs
- g. Working on our own effectiveness and accountability
- h. Exploring and increasing our understanding of the DE of humanitarian aid and climate finance
- i. Supporting peaceful solutions to nations in crisis and conflicts (e.g. under foreign occupation) and protecting civilians living in conflicts and war

We call on:

- i. All development actors, especially States as duty-bearers, to:
 - a. uphold the centrality of human rights in development and the practice of HRBA, and provide greater support for women in development cooperation
 - b. uphold and implement DE principles and other EDC commitment and address new challenges in development
- ii. States to:
 - a. fulfil their central role in development, rather than serve corporate interests
 - b. allocate finances for the implementation of the localised SDGs especially through the establishment of people-led cooperatives that provide grants free of interest
 - c. ensure that all developmental principles are localised up to community level
 - d. use national resources to fund CSOs' advocacy, to enhance their legitimacy and national democratic ownership
- iii. Private sector entities to:
 - a. adhere to all DE principles and implement HR standards
 - b. do no harm and contribute to poverty eradication, by adjusting their business models to the needs and realities of the poor
- iv. Development partners to:
 - a. engage in long term-financial and technical support for CSOs
 - b. fulfil ODA commitments, reverse shrinking ODA, and stop diversion of ODA for non-development purposes
 - c. make separate ODA commitments for such urgent concerns as climate change
 - d. uphold DE principles and establish safeguards in development cooperation and partnerships
- v. International and regional actors to push for the implementation of and respect for international law, and to protect the civilians, refugees, and displaced people
- vi. CSOs to be transparent and accountable to their development partners and to the constituencies that they support and serve