



CSO KEY ASKS

for a Transformative Global
Development Agenda

The CSO Key Asks are a set of demands developed by the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) to promote development effectiveness in all areas of work and help CSOs engage in transforming the global aid system. The document was closely reviewed by CSO constituencies across sectors and regions and was signed off by the CPDE Global Council on October 2014.

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Published by

CSOPartnership 
for **Development Effectiveness**

The Global Secretariat

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The following Key Asks are a rallying point and guidepost for CSOs engaging in the process of transforming the development cooperation system through development effectiveness, which entails addressing both the symptoms and structural causes of poverty, inequality, and social marginalisation.

To do so, CSOs need to be supported as independent development actors through political commitments and respective actions by their governments to inclusive development, a CSO enabling environment and overall respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights for all.

Common Principles, Changing World

CSOs call on all development actors to re-affirm, deepen, and carry out commitments made on development effectiveness. The demands and principles in these Key Asks are based on a thorough stock-taking on progress and needs, resulting in calls to:



The Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan (2011) marked a turning point in the aid and development effectiveness process, especially in terms of the recognition of civil society as an independent development stakeholder, and of the international commitment to a broad and inclusive partnership for development. CSOs shifted the discourse from aid to development effectiveness, resulting in a new set of principles such as democratic ownership, inclusive partnerships, transparency and accountability, and a commitment to people-centred development. For the CPDE, these agreements represent the basic minimum going forward applying to all development actors – a floor, not a ceiling.

Since Busan, there has been a gradual, systematic narrowing of space for civil society despite agreements to the contrary. At the same time, governments are placing increasing emphasis on and faith in, the role of the private sector in development with little attention to its accountability and responsibility towards sustainable development and human rights, and to the potential detriment of the role, responsibilities and space for governments to realize national development plans and realize the rights of all their citizens and peoples

Other processes outside the aid effectiveness policy arena are also gaining increasing importance in global development cooperation, including south-south cooperation and climate finance.

Meanwhile, a new set of sustainable development goals (SDGs), developed by United Nations (UN) Member States, will guide global development cooperation for the next fifteen years. Significant gaps remain including the lack of a comprehensive human rights-based approach. This new framework will only be as good as its national implementation, the means of holding governments and all development actors to account on their commitments, the range and modes of financing that development stakeholders can generate, as well as the governance structures that steer the implementation of this agenda. CSOs continue to press for human rights standards, poverty eradication, gender equality, social justice, decent work and environmental sustainability to be at the heart of any development agenda.

The CSO Key Asks challenge all development actors to deliver on a truly transformative development agenda.



Address New Challenges and Implement Existing Commitments on Aid and Development Effectiveness

The first High-Level Meeting (HLM) of the GPEDC in Mexico (April 2014) brought to light significant bottlenecks and gaps in the fulfillment of existing commitments. The principles enshrined in the Busan declaration need to be the minimum basis for all development cooperation decisions and challenges, specifically by:

- Counteracting the shrinking space for CSOs at country level by enabling the meaningful participation of social actors – such as trade unions, service providing organizations, rights defenders, women’s rights groups, indigenous people, farmers;
- Ensuring that CSOs are regarded on equal footing with other development actors, especially in the formulation and implementation of the SDGs;
- Establishing policy coherence for development and human rights fulfillment between different development cooperation processes as well as across and with other related policy areas;
- Ensuring private sector transparency, accountability and regulation standards, especially for multinational corporations and in Private Public Partnerships;
- Ensuring strict adherence of South-South aid providers to development effectiveness principles;
- Addressing inequalities including through the provision of social welfare and decent work;
- Monitoring new forms of development financing, including climate finance, and the restructuring of ODA.

CSOs call on governments to fulfill existing commitments, including those of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action, and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development. We challenge all actors to show political will and take decisive action by:

- Ending policy conditionality;
- Fully untying all forms of aid and implementing demand-driven technical assistance;
- Using country systems as the first option;

- Addressing the unpredictability of aid flows;
- Adhering to the highest standards of transparency and accountability, and accelerating efforts to fully implement the IATI component of the common standard to enable the publication of timely, comprehensive and forward-looking information, as well as improve open data access and use of gender-disaggregated data at country level in line with the Open Government Standards;
- Operationalising inclusive mechanisms, including access to justice at country, regional and global levels and establishing multi-stakeholder processes and social dialogue;
- Addressing fragmentation of development flows through ad hoc global reporting efforts;
- Realising the commitments on democratic ownership, gender equality and accountability made in Busan and reaffirmed in Mexico.

With the rise of South-South Cooperation (SSC) and new forms of development finance, there is a need to address emerging challenges in development cooperation by:

- Strengthening development effectiveness principles in SSC through strong national policy and institutional frameworks, which should include more comprehensive frameworks for accountability, environmental sustainability, and human rights, including women's rights, alongside an enabling environment for CSOs and multi-stakeholder dialogue;
- Addressing critical development gaps, including rising income inequality and precarious working conditions in Middle Income Countries (MICs) that are both donors and receivers of aid, through closer development cooperation among southern countries and the implementation of development effectiveness principles under Human Rights-Based Approaches (HRBA) to ensure sustainable living standards;
- Forging political commitment for adequate and appropriate "financing for development";
- Affirming the primacy of public financing in the fulfillment of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and climate finance commitments at the inter-governmental level, and the central role of states as duty bearers in providing public goods and services at country level;
- Meeting existing ODA commitments and address the issue of sovereign debt restructuring;
- Ensuring aid additionality, and development effectiveness principles in all development flows, and affirm the principles of CBDR (Common But Differentiated Responsibilities) with regard to climate finance;
- Mobilising resources for the Green Climate Fund, and ensure that all development flows deliver on Adaptation and Mitigation targets through immediate, sustainable, accountable and effective financing to countries and communities affected by climate change.



Put Human Rights at the Heart of Development

CPDE advocates for putting human rights-based approaches (HRBA) at the heart of development cooperation at all levels.

Development actors must defend and expand fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, association, and assembly, as well as the right to information, and the broader array of individual rights and freedoms for all people. This can be achieved by:

- Elevating HRBA as the core operating principle of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), within the GPEDC and in all relevant policy arenas;
- Harmonising aid and development policies and practices with human rights instruments and norms, including labour standards, and the fulfillment of gender equality and women's rights at all levels;
- Empowering rights-holders (people) to hold duty-bearers (governments) and other donors accountable in all development cooperation programs, projects and policies, as well as in governance structures at all levels;
- Implementing independent human rights complaints mechanisms, and providing effective means of redress for all actors adversely affected by development initiatives.

Promote Inclusive Development in all Development Processes



Inclusive development (ID) is a key commitment and promise of

Busan. It is both a political process of democratising development and eradicating poverty through the realisation of peoples' fundamental rights in law and policy, as well as a goal to make development processes and institutions more effective and participatory, while leveraging the fulfillment of other principles, including democratic ownership, transparency and accountability. It aims to ensure that development cooperation programs and policies are designed to benefit all individuals under HRBA. All development stakeholders can help realize inclusive development as a guiding principle in global, regional and national processes by:

- Identifying and addressing factors that impede inclusiveness in development, including in conflict and fragile states, for marginalised communities, and groups during humanitarian crises, and in middle-income countries;
- Practicing and promoting inclusive multi-stakeholder policy dialogue through country level platforms, social dialogue, and with institutionalized dialogue processes, as through the Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment¹ at global level;
- Embedding human rights, gender equality, decent work, the right to livelihoods and productive resources, environmental justice and sustainability in development policies, programmes and outcomes;
- Including civil society and communities in development processes as planners, implementers, beneficiaries and evaluators through a whole-of-society approach.

¹The Task Team on CSO Development Effectiveness and Enabling Environment is a multi-stakeholder partnership established to monitor and strengthen commitments in relation to civil society and aid effectiveness. It is composed of self-selected donors, partner governments and CSOs represented by CPDE.



Support an Enabling Environment for CSOs to realize their full potential as independent development actors

The Busan commitment on CSO enabling environment (EE) requires a framework that supports the realization of CSOs “right to initiative” and programming that is responsive, not directive, and that carves out political space for CSOs at all levels of governance. In more than a few countries, that space is shrinking at an alarming rate. Political will and action is required to reverse this trend by:

- Ensuring that all CSO actors participate on equal footing in multi-stakeholder processes and institutionalize dialogue between public entities and CSOs at all stages and levels of development processes;
- Creating appropriate legal and policy frameworks to protect and promote fundamental human and labour rights, as well as for women human rights and gender equality defenders;
- Monitoring existing commitments on minimum standards for enabling conditions for CSOs, and increase the number of countries involved in the GPEDC Monitoring Framework;
- Allocating resources, as well as technical and other development assistance with a view toward strengthening CSO capacity and organizing through diverse, flexible, and predictable domestic or international funding;
- In doing so, provide the right to seek, receive and use funding, while guaranteeing CSOs’ right to initiative in development programs as well as mechanisms for legal and judicial recourse.

Bring Private Sector-driven Processes in line with all Development Effectiveness Principles



CSOs insist that Private Sector (PS) entities involved in development cooperation adhere to all development effectiveness and human rights principles, promote and practice decent work and adopt transparency and accountability norms.

The PS must enable, not undermine, these fundamental principles. Regulatory mechanisms and binding regulations founded on global human rights, labour and environmental standards therefore need to be strengthened and applied to PS actions. The PS must:

- Adopt guidelines and binding regulations, underpinned by all relevant United Nations, International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) normative frameworks to ensure aid additionality and adherence to human rights and international labour, social, and environmental standards;
- Avoid societal and environmental risk-sharing through Occupational Health and Safety, environmental and decent work standards at all levels, with a specific focus on Private Public Partnerships;
- Affirm the central role of states in providing public goods and services at country level;
- Ensure the highest standards of transparency and accountability for the PS, especially for multinational corporations and in Private Public Partnerships, through appropriate monitoring and regulatory mechanisms at local, country and global levels;
- Involve communities and civil society at large in the planning, design, implementation and monitoring of PS-driven development projects, and ensure means of redress that are accessible to all citizens;
- Support Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) and local entrepreneurs especially in developing countries;
- Introduce mandatory and publicly accessible country-by-country tax reporting as in the G20/ OECD BEPS Action Plan but extended to developing countries;
- Strengthen labour protection, and expand the right to collective bargaining, trade union formation and collective action at country level to eliminate precarious work conditions and establish decent wages.



Build Inclusive Partnerships for the new Sustainable Development Goals

The implementation of the new SDGs should be rooted in HRBA and inclusive development to address the root causes of poverty and inequality, conflict and discrimination, climate change and environmental degradation. To this end, it is important to:

- Agree on concrete targets and commit to clear means of implementation for the SDGs;
- Ensure an equitable and inclusive multilateral forum for policy dialogue and standard setting that takes account of the “Institutionalization” of civil society space in the implementation of the SDGs;
- Promote democratic processes in development cooperation across different arenas, and maximise institutional synergies at the global level, especially between the UN Development Cooperation Forum and the GPEDC, with a greater voice given to developing countries and CSOs;
- Avoid fragmentation of development efforts through policy coherence for development and human rights fulfillment between development cooperation processes at national, regional and global levels and in relation to other policy areas;
- Uphold the right to development (RTD) and the principle of international solidarity as a basis for all development cooperation processes;
- Strengthen development cooperation and global solidarity especially for areas affected by conflicts, fragility and epidemics, where human rights are often not respected and CSO actions are severely constrained;
- Commit to and implement comprehensive accountability and monitoring mechanisms for all development stakeholders.

Annex 1:

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

The CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) is an open platform uniting CSOs from across the globe around a collective vision for a global development agenda that seeks the full realisation of human rights for all, rooted in social justice, decent work, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and an enabling environment for CSOs as independent development actors in their own right.

Recognising the changing development cooperation architecture and evolving dialogue around aid and development effectiveness, the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness and BetterAid merged to create a single platform to represent CSO voices. As a result, the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) was formally launched, a new open platform that unites civil society organisations (CSO) from around the world on the issue of development effectiveness.

The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation marked a shift from “aid effectiveness” to “development effectiveness” and reflected a new focus on addressing poverty reduction and factors affecting development, such as human rights, participatory democracy, social and environmental justice and sustainability, gender equality, decent work, sustainable change, and peace and security.

The changing nature of development also reinforced the need for non-aid-based development relationships. The CSO Partnership sits in the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) and has structures in place to engage governments and donors, as well as other policy arenas relevant to aid and development effectiveness.

Annex 2:

Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness¹

Civil society organizations are a vibrant and essential feature in the democratic life of countries across the globe. CSOs collaborate with the full diversity of people and promote their rights. The essential characteristics of CSOs as distinct development actors – that they are voluntary, diverse, non-partisan, autonomous, non-violent, working and collaborating for change – are the foundation for the Istanbul principles for CSO development effectiveness. These principles guide the work and practices of civil society organizations in both peaceful and conflict situations, in different areas of work from grassroots to policy advocacy, and in a continuum from humanitarian emergencies to long-term development.

Respect and promote human rights and social justice

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... develop and implement strategies, activities and practices that promote individual and collective human rights, including the right to development, with dignity, decent work, social justice and equity for all people.

Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girl's rights

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... promote and practice development cooperation embodying gender equity, reflecting women's concerns and experience, while supporting women's efforts to realize their individual and collective rights, participating as fully empowered actors in the development process.

Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation

CSOs are effective as development actors when they ... support the empowerment and inclusive participation of people to expand their democratic ownership over policies and development initiatives that affect their lives, with an emphasis on the poor and marginalized.

Promote Environmental Sustainability

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... develop and implement priorities and approaches that promote environmental sustainability for present and future generations, including urgent responses to climate crises, with specific attention to the socio-economic, cultural and indigenous conditions for ecological integrity and justice.

Practice transparency and accountability

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... demonstrate a sustained organizational commitment to transparency, multiple accountability, and integrity in their internal operations.

Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity

CSOs are effective as development actors when they ... commit to transparent relationships with CSOs and other development actors, freely and as equals, based on shared development goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship.

Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... enhance the ways they learn from their experience, from other CSOs and development actors, integrating evidence from development practice and results, including the knowledge and wisdom of local and indigenous communities, strengthening innovation and their vision for the future they would like to see.

Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... collaborate to realize sustainable outcomes and impacts of their development actions, focusing on results and conditions for lasting change for people, with special emphasis on poor and marginalized populations, ensuring an enduring legacy for present and future generations.

Guided by these Istanbul principles, CSOs are committed to take pro-active actions to improve and be fully accountable for their development practices. Equally important will be enabling policies and practices by all actors. Through actions consistent with these principles, donor and partner country governments demonstrate their Accra Agenda for Action pledge that they "share an interest in ensuring that CSO contributions to development reach their full potential". All governments have an obligation to uphold basic human rights – among others, the right to association, the right to assembly, and the freedom of expression. Together these are pre-conditions for effective development.

Istanbul, Turkey
September 29, 2010

¹The Istanbul Principles, as agreed at the Open Forum's Global Assembly in Istanbul, September 28 -30, 2010, are the foundation of the Open Forum's Draft International Framework on CSO Development Effectiveness. These principles are further elaborated in Version 2 of this Framework, which is being updated and will be found on the Open Forum's web site, www.cso-effectiveness.org.

