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Direktion für Entwicklung und Zusammenarbeit DEZA Direktionsbereich Regionale Zusammenarbeit / Abteilung Ostasien

EAD Regional Workshop on Effective Development Cooperation Workshop Report

30th April – 2nd May 2019, Phnom Penh, Cambodia



Background

At the SDC EAD's Regional Workshop hosted by the SCO in Cambodia, representatives from the region's SCOs, SDC HO and SECO as well as representatives of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), the Cambodian civil society and the local private sector (PS) came together to discuss the issue of effective development cooperation. The workshop had the following main objectives:

- To update participants on the newest developments in Berne (i.a. Dispatch 2021-2024)
- To clarify the role of effective development cooperation as key instrument for the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and identify region-specific effectiveness approaches and challenges
- To establish structured working relations between SCOs, SDC HO and the future Swiss Co-Chair of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) – Thomas Gass (GTO) – so as to foster country contributions to the global effectiveness dialogue

The three day-workshop was structured along thematic blocks relating to different aspects of effective development cooperation and comprised country-specific inputs, various group work sessions and a panel. The following report summarizes key issues and main take-aways of the workshop's discussions.

Scope of the Workshop

The implementation of the Agenda 2030 requires strong partnerships and a constructive and inclusive dialogue with different actors at the country and global level. In the context of the GPEDC, governments, civil society and other relevant development actors agreed on four key principles of effective development cooperation in order to accelerate progress towards the goals of the Agenda 2030:

- 1. Focus on results: Governments agree to establish transparent, country-led results frameworks with clear targets that support strategic policy-making based on their own national priorities. Development partners (DPs) commit to align their cooperation accordingly, thereby promoting country ownership.
- 2. Ownership of development priorities: To use country systems ensures long-term domestic capacity building. All DPs should strengthen and effectively use public financial management (PFM) and procurement systems. Country ownership also implies to further untie aid and to improve the predictability of cooperation funds from donors.
- **3. Inclusive development partnerships:** Governments should create an environment that enables the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) and the PS when formulating their national development agendas. To be constructive and of mutual benefit, multi-stakeholder initiatives and public-private partnerships need a sound regulatory framework and a platform for institutionalized dialogue.
- 4. Transparency and mutual accountability: Mutual accountability among all development actors needs to be strengthened through inclusive reviews. Development data should be publicly available to adequately track and evaluate progress. Governments also commit to include development funds in national budgets so as to guarantee parliamentary oversight. These efforts create mutual trust among partners and foster legitimacy vis-à-vis the broader public.

Participants discussed the various dimensions of effective development cooperation at the country level, critically assessed their cooperation modalities against the four principles and debated best practices and remaining challenges linked to their implementation. SCOs' inputs delivered a picture of SDC's cooperation partnerships in the region and shed light on the gaps between the theoretical set-up at the global level and its actual country-level realization.

The workshop's insights will guide the FP Development Effectiveness in its reflections on which areas and modalities of effective development cooperation to focus on as well as how to strengthen the institutional anchoring and knowledge exchange between the HO and the field. Additionally, SCOs' feedback will help to inform the Swiss Co-Chairmanship and the GPEDC work-program 2019/2020.

Summary of Thematic Sessions – Day 1

1. Updates from Berne (SDC and SECO)

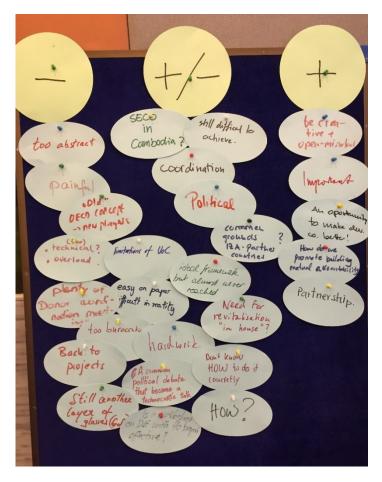
Jean-François Cuénod (CJF) presented the main pillars and novelties of the AVIS28 and the New Explanatory Report 2021-2024 and identified their relevance in the Asian contexts. The take-aways from the subsequent discussion are the following:

- Ambiguities related to the future geographical focus and thematic priorities: Among others, issues were raised around the perceived tensions between the selection criteria for priority countries, the strong emphasize on migration, implications for ongoing country strategies, future regional strategies in the light of the country list as well as the practical implications of the ongoing public consultation process.
- **Clarify complementarity with SECO**: Martin Saladin noted that the principle of complementarity between SECO and SDC remains crucial both under the future Dispatch and the New Foreign Economic Strategy. Given the increasing overlap, SDC is advised to proactively communicate how this complementarity will be implemented in practice.

2. Introduction to Effective Development Cooperation

Andrea Ries (FP Development Effectiveness) gave an overview of the GPEDC and its governance, the effectiveness principles and how the latter affect SDC's work. The discussion highlighted the following:

- **Review the validity of GPEDC principles:** Effective development cooperation is challenged by the diversity of development actors, country contexts, modalities of cooperation and the political tensions created through the shift from international to domestic accountability in the Agenda 2030 context. Participants discussed the need to critically assess the validity and common understanding of effectiveness principles in their current codification.
- Strengthen the link to the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs: The link between the effectiveness agenda and the Agenda 2030 is currently too weak. Equally, the relation between effectiveness and the SDGs is somewhat vague. A better integration and use of synergies between these frameworks should be forged both at the strategic and technical level. The latter could be initiated by linking the GPEDC Monitoring to the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).
- Strengthen effectiveness as country-driven process: As the study by Pierre Walther shows, the dialogue on effective development cooperation remains technical and without political implications in most countries. This is primarily due to the institutional anchoring (often in Ministries of Finance) and the poor coordination with line ministries. The Monitoring is often a rushed and isolated exercise. This problematic set-up was echoed by SCOs in the EAD region who mentioned the lack of a *whole of government approach* (WOGA) to effective development cooperation.
- Address conflicting interests: Effectiveness principles can reveal inherent conflicts between government and DP's interests. A balance must be sought between the normative interpretation of the principles and the overarching goal of creating a multi-stakeholder dialogue on effectiveness. That being said, although the principles are in line with the requirements of SDC Cooperation Strategy (e.g. focus on results, country ownership), their implementation can create a range of practical challenges and, thus, the necessity for an open discussion on possible limitations.



"What comes to your mind when you think of effective development cooperation?"

3. Effective Development Cooperation – The Example of Cambodia

The Deputy Head at the Policy Department of the Council for the Development of **Cambodia** (CDC), Kim Lumang Bopata, gave a presentation on the institutional contextualization of effective development cooperation in Cambodia's rapidly changing development context. Within its Development Cooperation and Partnership Strategy (DCPS 2019-2023), the RGC has set up an effectiveness framework with mechanisms to forge multi-stakeholder dialogues (bilateral consultations with DPs, sector-level and subnational dialogues, technical working groups /TWG) based on strategic information tools (i.a. ODA and NGO Database, Annual Development and Cooperation Partnership Reports, Joint Monitoring Indicators). Mr. Bopata stressed that effective development cooperation should primarily support the RGC's ambition to kick-start the LDC-graduation process in 2021, maintain current levels of GDP growth and support ODA's "catalytic role" in mobilizing other resources (esp. FDI, private investment).

- Critical-constructive evaluation of institutional set-up: Although Cambodia's effectiveness process is comprehensive on paper, the coordination between CDC and line ministries seems poor, and the majority of the TWG were said to be inactive. The approach to effective development cooperation reveals the dominant centralization of planning and decision-making: SDG localization and the identification of national development priorities is a top down-led process. The dialogue on effectiveness remains technical and its political implications are unclear.
- Alignment with country results framework (RF): CDC repeatedly expressed that DPs should better align to national priorities and its RF. Where possible, SDC should make efforts to closely orient its strategy towards the country's RF.
- Focus on LNOB: It became clear that there is no robust link between the notion of inclusive development that goes beyond GDP growth and focuses on the poorest and the RGC's reading of effective development cooperation. In this spirit, the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) to Cambodia warned that GPD growth alone is not an adequate measurement for development. When focusing on results, SDC should continue to promote the principle of "leave no one behind" (LNOB) and support a people-centered development approach.

4. Working in Partnership in Cambodia

The presentation of the SDC-commissioned study on multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) in **Cambodia** revealed that CSOs' inclusion in the national development process is often merely formal, tightly defined in scope and generally correlated to strong DP involvement. Both the representatives of CSO (CCC) and the PS (CAMFEBA) confirmed the lack of regular, substantial and timely involvement of civil society and PS experience. The subsequent panel discussion highlighted the following:

- Facilitate MSIs with COSs and PS: DPs need to facilitate the dialogue between the RGC, CSOs and the PS to overcome their lack of trust and build a vision of how to jointly contribute to the SDGs. The UN RC to Cambodia encouraged all DPs to make MSIs the default approach to development cooperation. As the RGC's leadership in existing fora seems questionable, DPs like SDC should champion this partnership modality at all levels (sector, program, and project).
- **Pool funding for COSs:** Facing the increasingly repressive political climate, CCC stressed the importance of donors to better coordinate and pool funding for CSOs. For both the EU and SDC, a precondition to this would be to strategically increase CSOs' absorption capacity.
- Strengthen downward accountability: Panelists discussed the weak role of the parliament and the necessity to promote downward accountability in effective development cooperation. Such efforts are an essential component of a people-centred development approach that is supported by the local populations and should, thus, be better considered in SDC's strategies. At the same time, limitations must be acknowledged where the legislative power is controlled by one ruling party.
- European Joint Programming (EJP): Participants discussed the positive impact of the EJP and the respective Swiss engagement in terms of harmonization, coordination and policy dialogue visà-vis the RGC. The EU and SCO in Cambodia reaffirmed the importance of close future collaboration, although a comprehensive adoption of the EJP by SDC seems unlikely.
- **Remaining challenges:** Among other things, China's absence in informal DP groups and in the effectiveness dialogue as well as the EU's planned budget support and the possible repercussions of a suspension of Cambodia's preferential trade benefits under the "Everything But Arms Scheme" are issues that SDC needs to closely monitor and coordinate with other DPs.



Panel discussion with representatives of the Cambodian civil society, the local UN RC (Pauline Tamesis) and the Deputy Head of the EU Cooperation in Cambodia (Camilla Lombard).

Summary of Thematic Sessions – Day 2

5. Working with the Private Sector

To increase the engagement with the private sector (PSE/ EPS) in development cooperation forms an integral part of Swiss Cooperation Strategies and the global effectiveness dialogue alike. The GPEDC is currently drafting guidelines on effective PSE. Equally, the SDC KEP policy on EPS is in the process of approval. Against this background, participants assessed the current status, future potential and remaining challenges of PSE in the EAD countries in group work sessions.

- **Challenges in the field**: SCOs raised issues like the poor regulatory environment for businesses, scarce access to finance, weak sector associations, capacity limitations of local SMEs, the informal or illicit nature of large parts of the economy, the increased activity of large companies with no interest in PSE and the challenge to attract the PS to the remote and poor areas where SDC is active.
- Regional support of SCOs in PSE: SCOs need more support in mapping adequate PSE partners. Firstly, the political divisions of Swiss Embassies could assist SCOs with politic-economic analyses of the market and identify (Swiss) actors for PSE projects. Secondly, the Swiss Embassy in Bangkok could leverage its contacts with Swiss companies and business associations active in the region to mobilize further partners. Moreover, SCOs are advised to draw on the region-specific expertise of the Swiss Investment Fund for Emerging Markets (SIFEM) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), especially in the context of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- SDC HQ support of SCOs in PSE: SCOs are invited to engage in the country-specific workshops
 offered by SDC KEP. The latter, in turn, is encouraged to make its current risk assessment tool
 more user-friendly for SCOs and to advise SCOs on the early, strategic involvement of the PS during
 project planning. Further, the conceptual differences between PSE and private sector development
 as well as the baseline-profiles of a PSE partner (more than CSR, etc.) must be clarified.
- Institutional PSE expertise: SDC KEP and SECO should establish an institutionalized exchange
 of PSE expertise and make sure to routinely consult with FDFA's HSD regarding human rightsrelated safeguards. SDC KEP should consider relying on external expertise to increase its capacity.
 More generally, SDC should strengthen its advocacy for PSE among businesses and strategically
 attract preferred partners.

• Norm-based approach to PSE: Participants discussed the potential risks related to the involvement of the PS in generating public goods, human rights violations, reputational risks for SDC and the quest (and limitations) to promote a change in traditional business models altogether. In the spirit of WOGA, it is essential to approach PSE based on a coherent, value-based strategy and case-by-case evidence of a real added-value towards reaching the SDGs. For both SDC and SECO, it is important to keep engaged in international initiatives and standard promotion to make sure PSE is based on a solid strategy. Eventually, to what extent PSE is desirable should equally depend on the partner country's own standing and PSE priorities; the latter should help guide SDC's PSE activities.

6. Enabling Environment for Civil Society (EEfCS)

The SCOs in **Lao PDR** and **Myanmar** each presented their current working modalities and challenges in the context of EEfCS. CSOs and non-profit associations (NPAs, as they are called in Lao PDR) are up against a shrinking or categorically shut civic space, characterized by repressive regulations, surveillance and burdensome registration procedures. CSOs / NPAs are only tolerated in their serviceprovider role, while human rights-based groups are side-lined – a common trend in most of the EAD countries. Participants discussed options to empower CSOs and broaden the civic space:

- **Funding modalities**: CSOs heavily depend on donor funding. SDC should continue to support CSOs via multi-donor trust funds, consider pooling funds at country or even regional level and look into supporting local organisations that are not yet registered with a kick-start funding.
- **Promote CSO platforms**: DPs should facilitate platforms for CSOs to exchange, build alliances and possibly bridge their own divisions due to diverging stances vis-à-vis the government (like in Myanmar).
- **Promote MSIs:** It is important to identify entry-points and niches for MSIs at all levels and in all sectors, as these have proven to be one of the most effective mechanisms to create an inclusive dialogue. In Mongolia, a MSI-culture has yet to be established.
- Facilitate CSO voices in international processes: DPs should promote CSOs' capacity to meaningfully contribute to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and its shadow reports, the VNRs, CSO-related fora at ASEAN, etc.
- Leverage the effectiveness framework in policy dialogue: DPs should strategically leverage the effectiveness framework to remind governments of their political commitments to substantially include CSOs.
- **Take-aways at the GPEDC level**: There is a clear discrepancy between the relevance and assertiveness of CSOs in the global effectiveness dialogue and the reality of CSOs on the ground. The Swiss Co-Chair will need to strategically manage the tension between the role of and advocacy for CSOs (esp. human rights-based CSOs) and the goal of (re-)engaging new donors (esp. China) into a pragmatic dialogue on effectiveness.

7. Use of Country Systems (UCS)

The SCO in **Mongolia** discussed the implementation of UCS when delivering development cooperation. Even in a politically rather stable country like Mongolia, SDC does not systematically implement UCS. This is i.a. due to the government's slow follow-up of the Busan Agreement, the patchy implementation of the laws on donor coordination, capacity limitations and high fiduciary risks. As in all countries of the EAD region, the score for aid on-budget is poor. In Mongolia, a proven strategy for SDC has been to channel funds through UN agencies (e.g. UNDP, UNFPA) that work with national agencies; these, in turn, are able to strengthen their institutional capacity (e.g. unified reporting).

- Invest in downward accountability: It is clear that the EU and international development institutions would need to make huge investments to foster the preconditions for UCS. SDC should focus and invest in UCS where there is an added-value for stronger downward accountability and transparent governance, also at subnational level. Given SDC's exit strategy in Mongolia, this is not a priority.
- Address SDC modalities affecting UCS: It is worth noting that SDC's project-based approach, the
 increased use of trust-funds and the use of its own monitoring indicators (Aggregated Reference
 Indicators, ARIs) inhibit UCS. Additionally, given SDC's decentralized structure SCOs decide
 whether or not to make UCS in their projects the overall commitment to UCS must be interpreted
 against SCOs decision leeway. SDC should consider revising its own procedures and data systems
 to the extent that the latter conflict with the principle of UCS. Overall, SDC should contribute to
 strengthen countries' statistical capacity and generate data along the SDGs.
- **Create government ownership**: Depending on the context, SDC could look into pursuing jointsignature implementation with the governments so as to foster greater ownership and accountability to enable UCS.

- Address limitations and tensions around UCS: It is essential to openly discuss the (potential) trade-offs between UCS and the effectiveness or quality of cooperation. Furthermore, SDC must strategically navigate the area of conflict between increasing UCS and the domestic pressure to disclose the country conditions the Agency works in to the Swiss public (e.g. systemic corruption, illiberal regimes). Participants questioned whether to take more risks in UCS is advisable.
- **Take-aways at the GPEDC level**: An open discussion is needed on the limitations and political nature of UCS as well as potential trade-offs between UCS and other effectiveness principles (e.g. focus on results). The ownership of governments to work towards the preconditions that enable UCS is often scarce. Governments should be reminded of that responsibility in the global dialogue on effectiveness. The GPEDC is encouraged to dedicate resources to collect best practices in terms of UCS.

8. The Multilateral Perspective on Effective Development Cooperation

Steve Tharakan (TAE) gave a brief presentation on the multilateral perspective on effectiveness. He updated participants on the current UN Development System reform, i.a. the reinvigorated RC system and the re-design of the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF). TAE further presented ongoing developments at the Multilateral Organizations Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) and highlighted the role of its reviews for selecting multilateral partners as well as the usefulness of such data for SDC when communicating respective choices to the public (domestic accountability).

Summary of Thematic Sessions – Day 3

9. SDC NEXUS Approach

CJF discussed SDC's humanitarian-development-peacebuilding (HDP) NEXUS and gave an overview of the Management Response to the commissioned NEXUS evaluation in 2018. CJF identified room for improvement in terms of organisational unity at SDC HO and the quest for one joint medium-term credit framework. Martin Saladin noted that in 21 out of 25 countries where SECO delivers development cooperation, there is a common strategy with SDC in place that effectively incorporates the NEXUS.

• **Dialogue with SECO on NEXUS**: SECO HO will soon follow up with a structured debate on how to approach the HDP-link in its development projects. SDC should closely follow and assist this process where needed.

10. Effective Development Cooperation in Fragile Contexts

The SCO in **Myanmar** exemplified the implementation of effective development cooperation in a fragile, war-torn country with mixed-controlled territory and numerous ethnic armed organisation (EAOs). The latter are generally recognized as service providers. However, neither DPs nor EAOs were sufficiently consulted and included in Myanmar's development plans and policies, which makes the alignment for donors somewhat difficult. The SCO retains that Myanmar's past GPEDC Monitoring results gave rise to a distorted picture. Overall, the inter-ministerial coordination and the multi-stakeholder dialogue on effectiveness is weak, the developmental space as well as the role of CSOs / EAOs in it is shrinking. Like in other EAD countries, Swiss aid is untied and predictable but does not flow through national systems.

- **Strong NEXUS approach:** Not least due to the integrated embassy model, the implementation of the NEXUS is coherent and based on a common analysis. SDC can leverage its experiences in Myanmar and explore how the NEXUS can be linked to the effectiveness framework.
- Engage peace actors in effectiveness dialogue: Taking into account the proximity of development and peace actors, SDC should make efforts to better include the latter (incl. HSD) in the effectiveness dialogue. It was noted that peace actors are generally unaware of the development effectiveness framework.
- **Political dialogue on inclusive partnerships:** Recently, DPs in Myanmar were officially discouraged to work with EAOs, however, the SCO is bound to their cooperation to achieve results in the poorest areas (i.a. Rakhine). Given the power fragmentation, it is important to continue to promote dialogue, MSIs and trust-building measures. This will facilitate stability and the transformation of EAOs into more legitimate actors. In any context but especially in fragile states, the dialogue on effectiveness and inclusive partnerships must be strengthened at the national and subnational level alike.
- Forge shared understanding on fragility context: A key issue is whether Myanmar actually accepts the status of "fragility" and thereto-linked policy consequences. That said, it is equally important for donors to forge a common position and understanding of the implications of fragility for cooperation modalities. SDC should consider ways to engage with all DPs in such discussions, especially with regional actors like China, Vietnam and Japan.

• **Take-aways at the GPEDC level**: Seeing that more than 60% of states/ territories that took part in the 2018 GPEDC Monitoring round are (extremely) fragile, the work-stream on fragility should represent a thematic priority. The currently debated tailored monitoring approach for fragile and conflict-affected states could be considered as the default, more trimmed monitoring set-up.

11. Working with China in the Region

In the last session of the workshop, participants – together with Mr. Chan Sophal from the Cambodian think tank *Centre for Policy Study* – discussed issues related to the increased activities of China as an actor that defies the principles of effectiveness and the GPEDC platform. China's presence also challenges the role and relevance of Western development actors. While many countries in fact need infrastructure investments, China's costly projects as well as its extensive extractive and land-buying activities threaten state sovereignty and fiscal stability. Further, China does not invest in local human resources. And although governments and their populations are becoming increasingly aware of many problematic aspects of China's economic interventions in the region, they often face big geopolitical and financial pressures that pushes them to accept Chinese terms and conditions of engagement. What is more, China is becoming a "role model" when it comes to governance issues (e.g. in Lao PDR). The main take-aways of the session are:

- Strengthen institutional capacity: Mr. Sophal noted that it will be essential for DPs like SDC to increase local negotiation capacities, strengthen rule of law procedures and foster the expertise of both state and non-state actors in assessing objective development needs in order to face Chinese contracting power.
- Strengthen human resources and CSOs: SDC and other Western DPs should continue with the kind of engagement that rigorously increases human resources and opens up the civic space for CSOs. As China's development projects do not follow the principle of LNOB and disregard civil society, these should continue to be the guiding approach for SDC in the region. As small donor, it is essential to partner with other DPs on these matters.
- Address root causes of instability: The value-added of SDC engagement is and should continue to be that its projects tackle the root causes of (ethnic) conflict, instability, and social inequality.
- Use soft power and engage in regional fora: SDC should use Switzerland's soft power and engage in regional fora like ASEAN and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to address China-related issues.
- Engage with China based on the Agenda 2030: As there are many concerns about safeguarding environmental and social standards in the context of the BRI, SDC is advised to leverage the Agenda 2030 as common ground to start a pragmatic dialogue with China on issues like growth-spurred environmental degradation. Generally, it is essential to closely monitor the BRI and reach informed conclusions on the trade-offs between the opportunities and risks of a Swiss engagement.



Felix Fellmann, Chan Sophal and Michal Harari discussing China's growing influence in the region.

Summary of Recommendations for the Swiss GPEDC Co-Chair

- The **link between the Agenda 203**0, the SDGs and the GPEDC must be further strengthened both at the domestic and international level. A key entry-point is **LNOB**.
- While it is apparent that regional trends and similarities characterize the EAD countries, their specific contexts and challenges vary greatly. There is, thus, **no "one size fits all" approach** when it comes to the implementation of effectiveness at country-level. This must be acknowledged by SDC and the GPEDC alike.
- Possible tensions between the effectiveness principles must be openly discussed.
- Essentially, effective development cooperation is a country-driven political process. The need for a both a WOGA approach to effectiveness and a follow-up political dialogue among development stakeholders must be highlighted.
- The future Swiss Co-Chairmanship should be leveraged by SDC to create more **awareness and a dialogue on the GPEDC among donors**, which is sporadic or non-existent.
- The **GPEDC Monitoring must be revised** in order to make it more useful and sustainable for countries.
- The international community faces a **huge data challenge** to measure progress towards the SDGs. The Co-Chair should promote the policy dialogue on "data 4 development" and highlight the importance of strengthening the statistical capacities of partner countries.
- Promote a constructive and pragmatic dialogue with new donors (incl. China) on effectiveness.

NEXT STEPS:

SDC HQ:

- Review own procedures in line with UCS (incl. ARIs)
- Capitalize experiences with MSIs, incl. sector-wide approaches (SWAP)
- Build on SECO's know-how and network to get tailored support regarding PSE
- Clarify institutional definitions of relevant concepts (UCS, on-budget vs. on-treasury aid, etc.)
- Continue to engage in a dialogue with new donors, esp. with China based on the MoU with the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA)

Regional Level:

- Support SCOs in their dialogue with China on effective development cooperation
- Make use of regional institutions to address effective development cooperation in general and issues with China in particular
- Capitalize the contacts of the Swiss Embassy in Bangkok to Swiss PS actors for PSE

GPEDC Level:

- Revise the Global Monitoring to make it relevant for countries and trigger a political dialogue that enables positive changes. The current approach is too burdensome and unsustainable
- At country-level, interactive partnership reviews must be promoted to assess the current performance of effective development cooperation
- Further work on fragility and the humanitarian-development-peace NEXUS is needed, which should be then mirrored in the Monitoring
- Continue to engage in a dialogue with new donors (esp. China) in a pragmatic way

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