



Session 2 – Locally-led development: exploring best practices for promoting agency, accountability and results

Session objective: The main objective of this session is to examine the practical implications of a locally-led approach to development, drawing on perspectives from relevant partners and exploring best practices for navigating trade-offs. The multi-stakeholder panel discussion will include reflections on how locally-led development can support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, and explore the commitments and concrete actions that are being taken to support local actors.

Over the past decade, locally-led development has become increasingly topical among development co-operation experts and practitioners. To this end, development stakeholders are taking action to make development co-operation more effective, and tackle inherent power imbalances through strengthened local leadership. The calls for promoting locally-led development build on commitments outlined in various multilateral efforts, processes and outcomes, including, the Paris Declaration (2005), the Busan High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (2011), the Nairobi High-Level Meeting of the GPEDC (2016), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Grand Bargain outcomes of 2016 and 2021, and the OECD-DAC Recommendations on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance (2021), and the Locally-Led Adaptation Principles (2021). Interest and adherence to this approach is exemplified by recent commitments from development partners such as USAID, as well as by the OECD/DAC's ongoing 'peer-learning', focused on working towards a shared understanding of the key parameters of locally-led development. There are key definitional questions to which international consensus is yet to be shaped. For example, which actors are local? And what is needed to support them effectively? Renewed political momentum on local leadership in development co-operation is also linked to efforts to get the SDGs back on track, along with increasing attention to the 'de-colonization' of development, and the need for more equal partnerships.

The principles of effective development cooperation, specifically on ownership and inclusive partnerships, are a key vehicle to empower national and local actors in strengthening the effectiveness of development co-operation at country level, to ensure that no one is left behind. As such, discussions around the practical implications of locally-led development are timely. This session will hear from a broad variety of partners, to demonstrate how empowering local actors while strengthening government systems can help untangle effectiveness dilemmas.

Guiding questions:

- What does a locally-led development approach look like to you? What are the benefits and drawbacks to such an approach?
- In what ways can a locally-led approach to development support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda?
- What are some best practices when it comes to implementing locally-led approaches to development? How is your organization/agency/government putting these best practices into use?
- What are the challenges to development partners engaging more closely with local actors? What are concrete commitments and actions that can help overcome these challenges?