WIDER Working Paper 2023/28

Unpacking 'ownership' in development co-operation effectiveness

Perspectives of Southern recipients

Debapriya Bhattacharya, Towfiqul Islam Khan, and Najeeba Mohammed Altaf*

February 2023

In partnership with

Abstract: 'Country ownership' continues to grow more as an idealized requirement than an operational concept for effective development co-operation. Provider countries often shy away from taking onboard recipient countries' development priorities, public financial management and procurement systems, results frameworks, and monitoring mechanisms. Based on the outputs of a research programme, this paper reviews the experience of six countries from three continents regarding the application of the concept of 'ownership' at the sectoral level in the respective countries. The paper explores what 'collective ownership' instead of 'country ownership' would entail—from conceptualization to delivery of a foreign aid-supported development intervention. The findings are pertinent to the ongoing debates concerning the relevance and application of 'development effectiveness' principles for achieving effective and sustainable development outcomes and the scope for replicability of good practices within a specific national context.

Key words: collective ownership, effective development co-operation, sector

Acknowledgements: We are grateful to the participants at a session at the International Research Conference on the Effectiveness of Development Co-operation, organized by the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC), and the European Commission (DG INTPA) in Brussels on 17 November 2022, where the draft of the paper was presented. In particular, we thank Rachel Gisselquist, Senior Research Fellow, and Andrea Vaccaro, Visiting Researcher at UNU-WIDER for their comments on the paper. We also give special thanks to Christina Etzell, Policy Officer, European Commission for her feedback on an earlier draft.

This research study is released in connection with the International Research Conference on the Effectiveness of Development Cooperation, jointly organized by UNU-WIDER, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), and the European Commission (DG INTPA) on 17–18 November 2022 in Brussels, Belgium.

The paper is based on the outputs of a multi-country research programme titled 'Exploring "Development Effectiveness" at the Sectoral Level in Southern Countries' is jointly implemented by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and the Group for the Analysis of Development (GRADE) at the Secretariat of Southern Voice and supported by the European Commission.

* Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka, Bangladesh, corresponding author email: deb.bhattacharya@cpd.org.bd

This paper is published under the UNU-WIDER project The state and statebuilding in the Global South – international and local interactions. It is released in connection with the International Research Conference on the Effectiveness of Development Cooperation, jointly organized by UNU-WIDER, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), and the European Commission (DG INTPA) on 17–18 November 2022 in Brussels, Belgium.

Information and requests: publications@wider.unu.edu

ISSN 1798-7237 ISBN 978-92-9267-336-9

https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2023/336-9

Typescript prepared by Lesley Ellen.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The 'owning' of a foreign aid-supported development intervention is a much-vaunted concept for ensuring development co-operation effectiveness but it has limited operational validation. The present paper focuses on four issues that underpin this problematique.

First, the discussion about 'ownership' has exclusively focused on the processes and activities at the recipient level. However, ownership of an intervention by the provider may be critical in defining the development intervention outcomes. This issue has acquired a new dimension as international development co-operation loses traction among taxpayers in the provider countries. The ongoing pandemic and alternative demands for resources have further complicated the predictability of development co-operation. It has become critical to redefine ownership using variables that simultaneously consider the interests of both the provider and recipient. This would improve the effectiveness of the development intervention and could bring more predictability to co-operation, which is one of the weak spots.

The second issue relates to how ownership is often understood as the provider's responsiveness to a recipient government's development priorities as enunciated in its national plan or policy documents. This could be a response by the provider to a recipient's public investment programme, strategic or policy document, and/or a specific request made by the recipient government. The issue is that, notwithstanding the provider's responsiveness to national priorities as enunciated by recipients, ownership can still remain supply driven. This is particularly the case when a recipient country's national priorities are loosely formulated or broadly articulated. However, this can generate a form of 'shared ownership' between provider and recipient countries, even though it does not ensure the effective allocation of resources.

The third issue relates to restricting the concept of ownership only to the purview of the recipient government. This narrow approach has become particularly relevant as the public space for discourse is diminishing in many developing countries that suffer from weak democratic practices. Indeed national priorities are generally dictated by the political ambitions of the government in a recipient country or are derived through bureaucratic processes without adequate consultation with relevant stakeholders. Moreover, it has been observed in many cases that providers support equating recipient government ownership with country ownership of a development intervention through a lack of encouragement to include other development actors such as civil society, local governments, and the private sector (Stern et al. 2008). However, the 'inclusive' or 'shared' aspect of ownership has also been examined over the last decade. It is understood to indicate that recipient governments will take the lead in shaping the country's development policies while engaging other stakeholders in the development process (Keijzer et al. 2019). The role of 'providers' in this process emerges through support for recipient countries' priorities, investment in the capacity development of individuals and institutions, and utilization of recipient countries' public financial management (PFM) systems (OECD 2008a).

The fourth issue relates to the monitorable indicators that reflect a foreign-aided project's nature and level of ownership in the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) monitoring exercise. There may be questions about the robustness of the indicators used by the GPEDC monitoring process, such as the quality of a recipient country's PFM system, use of recipient country systems by the provider, proportion of untied aid, and the predictability of development co-operation to examine 'country ownership'. The concept needs to be clarified to elucidate the operational anchor points of the concept of ownership, evolve the appropriate indicators in this regard, and ensure data availability.

It should also be noted that the profiles of both recipients and providers of development co-operation have undergone change in recent decades. As the primary focus in the examination of foreign aid-supported development interventions, recipient countries largely comprise those which are graduating from or have graduated from low-income country and least-developed country status. Furthermore, conflict-affected or fragile countries are also on the rise among the recipients. Thus it is necessary to round out the group of recipients to include countries that suffer from disadvantages in terms of geography, environmental issues, conflict, and governance issues, among others (Bhattacharya and Khan 2020). These are countries in which the agriculture, health, education, and social protection sectors play a vital role in sustained growth and development. Yet these countries are also seeking to achieve structural change with the support of official development assistance (ODA), specifically ODA grants.

The providers of development co-operation are also undergoing transition. The tightening of ODA budgets, which started from the global economic and financial crisis of 2008, has generally been further constrained by the increase in in-country refugee costs leading to a decline in the disbursed volumes of ODA and its concessionality, followed by a concurrent increase in both investment in global public goods—primarily funding for action against climate change—and the growing multilateralization of bilateral aid (Bhattacharya and Khan 2020; OECD 2022). Indeed there has been a renewed emphasis on development effectiveness in recent years. This therefore presents an opportune moment to re-examine the concept of ownership and its new underlying elements, given the changes in the priorities of provider countries.

1.2 Objectives

In view of the above, in this paper we seek to articulate a contemporary understanding of the 'ownership' principle and the various dimensions underpinning it. In line with this we approach 'country ownership' from the global perspective and country-level experiences, and we articulate a forward-looking approach to ownership. To this end we track the evolution of the ownership concept as reflected in international literature. We also review how ownership manifests across the process chain, and we identify factors that promote or impede the ownership principle in practice at the recipient-country level. In addition we explore the scope for a 'collective' form of ownership in lieu of 'country' ownership in the context of attaining development co-operation effectiveness.

1.3 Methodology, scope, and analytical framework

Methodology and scope

The paper draws on the findings from six sector-focused case studies based in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The case studies explore the application of the Busan Principles in the education, social protection, and agriculture sectors of Bangladesh, El Salvador, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, and Senegal and their relation to improved sector development outcomes.[1] It is also based on findings articulated in four thematic papers that explore broader themes of effective development co-operation.

---

[1] These case studies are being conducted as part of a research project funded by the European Commission pertaining to examining the application of the Busan Principles of Development Effectiveness in various sectoral and national contexts. See Table A1 in the Appendix for the list of case studies.

Against this backdrop we examine sectoral experiences in the application of the first Busan Principle, i.e. 'ownership of development priorities by developing countries', and the related 'effectiveness to impact' initiatives.[2] We identify the initiatives as the means through which the principles are practically applied at the sectoral level and explore the potential of external factors to play a role in facilitating or constraining the effectiveness of the initiatives.

The paper is based on, inter alia, a review of relevant academic literature, publications from pertinent United Nations (UN) wings and the GPEDC, and other relevant national policy documents which mark the evolution of the ownership concept. Other methods include key informant interviews and workshops with relevant experts within the sectors and countries examined in the case studies and thematic papers. These experts consist of key representatives from international agencies and provider countries, government officials of recipient countries overseeing the execution of the sectoral strategies, representatives from policy-oriented civil society think tanks or organizations, sector development experts, and representatives of sectoral beneficiaries.

The extensive desk research combined with the findings from the key informant interviews and validation workshops served to unpack the relevance of the concept of country ownership and its contribution to improved development outcomes at the recipient-sector level.

Analytical framework

We began by identifying areas within the development co-operation value chain which could indicate more of a 'collective ownership'. As mentioned previously ownership has conventionally been understood as the commitment made by recipient-country governments to their respective national and sectoral development through the adoption of a development plan, programmes, and/or strategy. Our research explores further the roles that providers may have played or could play to secure ownership and ensure improved effectiveness of development co-operation at the sectoral level. These areas of provider involvement include: (i) the conceptualization process of the sector strategy or plan; (ii) financing—particularly the resource allocation at the programme/project level and its internalization; (iii) implementation and monitoring processes; (iv) ensuring the sustainability of the development intervention; and (v) inclusivity of other key stakeholders throughout the processes.

1.4 Layout of the paper

After this introduction (Section 1) we review the evolving definitions of ownership by mapping the historical milestones that are pivotal in shaping the narrative (Section 2). This is followed by a deep dive into experiences of operationalizing ownership at the sector and country levels across Bangladesh, Rwanda, Tanzania, El Salvador, Senegal, and Uganda (Section 3). We then conclude with a concise overview of observed ownership patterns across various stakeholders, including international development partners (IDPs),[3] within recipient countries.

---

[2] Six 'Effectiveness to Impact' initiatives were designed by the GPEDC and launched in 2020 to 'support the practical application of the Busan Principles at the sector level'. These include 'inclusive dialogues', 'joint analysis, drafting and review', 'agreed priorities and results framework', 'joint planning and budgeting', 'implementation modalities to strengthen national systems', and 'transparent evaluation and monitoring process' (GPEDC 2022).

[3] The term 'international development partners' (IDPs) is used instead of 'donors'. It is used interchangeably with 'provider(s)' throughout this paper.

2 Looking back on ownership in development co-operation

'Ownership' of a recipient country is not a recently unveiled concept within the realm of international development co-operation. Its predecessor—borrowing country 'commitment'—was first discussed in the mid-1980s. At that time commitment was understood to mean: (i) the extent of agreement between a lender and borrower in relation to a programme's objectives and methods for achieving them; and (ii) the extent of interest among a borrower's key actors for implementing said programme (Heaver and Israel 1986). However, it was a decade later in the mid-1990s when the concept really took off (Woll 2006). Against this background this section explores the motivations underpinning the necessity of country ownership, the changes in its interpretation, the stakeholders involved, and its indicators or assessment over the years.

The primary motivation for promoting ownership among recipient countries, as stated by Heaver and Israel (1986: 1), was the general understanding that a 'borrower's commitment' to development projects will 'explain the success of a lending operation', and the lack thereof will consequently be 'one of the most commonly quoted cases of unsatisfactory programme or project implementation and lower than expected impact'. As mentioned earlier the renewed focus on country ownership in the mid-1990s was brought about to counteract the criticism of the lenders for their conditionality-heavy lending during the peak structural adjustment era of the 1980s (Woll 2006). However, the concept of attaining ownership by aligning the borrowing country's policy direction with a lender's preference or ideal was a precursor to successful programme implementation and, by extension, effective use of foreign aid has remained fairly consistent in the years since the concept was first brought to light (Castel-Branco 2008; Faust 2010; Rahman 2021).

While the main trigger for stressing ownership of recipient countries may have remained somewhat consistent in the last three decades, its interpretation has seen some changes. The 1996 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) resolution required a recipient country to 'own' its national goals and strategies and 'lead' its development processes through dialogue. The understanding here was that recipient countries would design 'an integrated set of goals' based on targets broadly agreed upon by the international community—a first step to 'committing' their national goals and strategies. In this regard it was suggested that broad consensus and commitment should be sought from all levels of government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and external partners through dialogue (OECD 1996).

In 1999 the World Bank introduced the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in place of the Structural Adjustment Programme, which had been criticized for undermining recipient countries' authority and autonomy. Through SAPs recipients were encouraged to develop their country strategies and policies and the World Bank would then support this ownership through financial support for the nationally derived strategies (Hasselskog and Schierenbeck 2017).

Not long after introduction of the PRSPs, the 'Comprehensive Development Framework' proposed by former World Bank President Wolfensohn was considered a decisive event in emboldening the concept of 'owning'. Echoing the sentiments of 1986, his speech referred to the need for a recipient country to be in the driver's seat: 'they [recipients] must determine goals and the phasing, timing and sequencing of programs' (Rahman 2021; Wolfensohn 2000). It was also acknowledged that development partners would only step in to support this ownership. When possible, this ownership would be fostered through a 'public debate' that would include government officials, members of the international development community, civil society, and the private sector (Wolfensohn 2000).

In 2003 the Rome Declaration on Harmonisation 'attached high importance' to a recipient government's leadership role and subsequently zeroed in on a much narrower approach to country ownership for coordinating aid and owning the country's development results (OECD 2003). Under this understanding development partners would step in to support recipient governments, i.e. the central entity of the development process, to strengthen partnerships and engagement with civil society and the private sector (Shimomura and Ohno 2005).

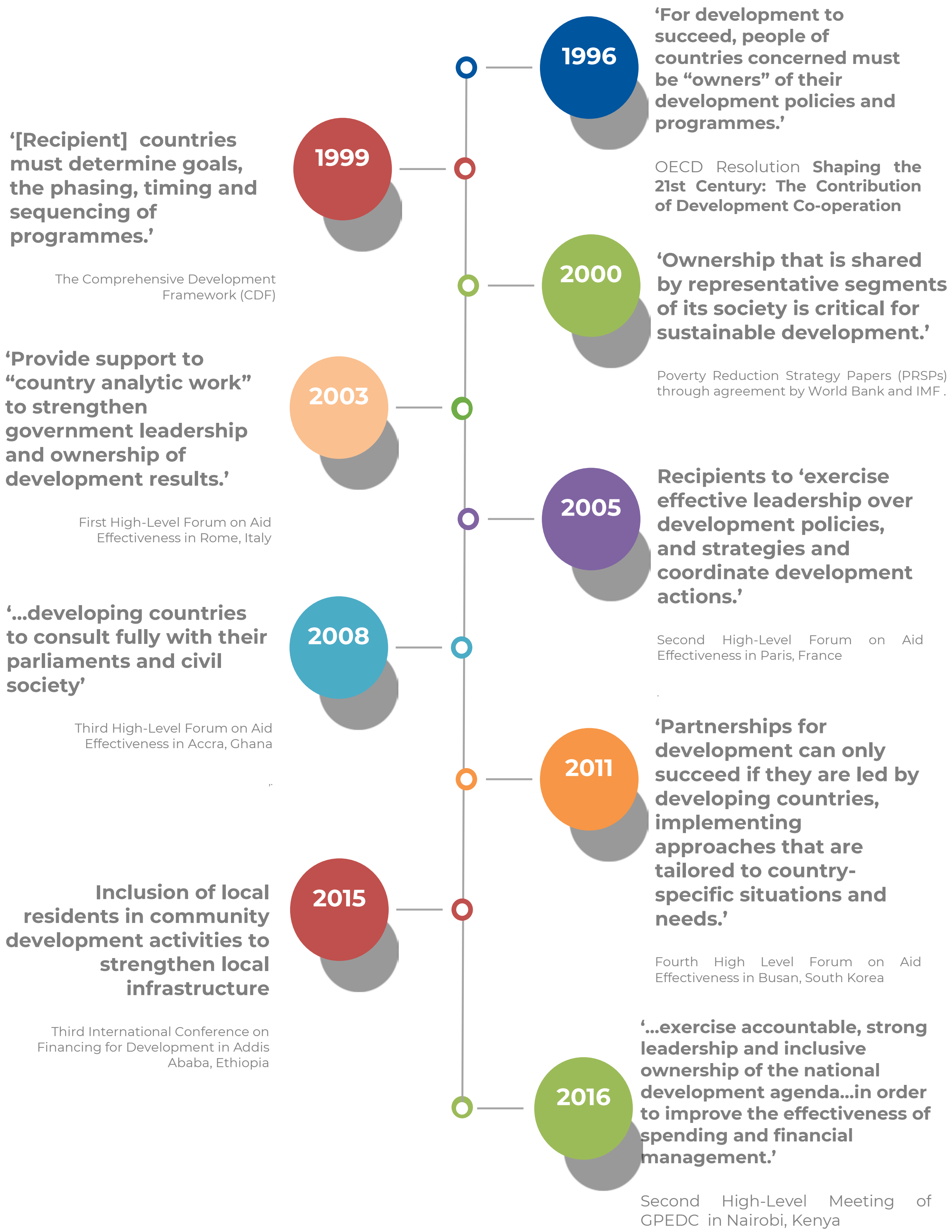
During the second High-Level Forum (HLF) held in Paris in 2005 and in the consequent Paris Declaration, 'ownership' was first introduced as a guiding principle with monitorable indicators[4] (Hasselskog and Schierenbeck 2017). This was defined as 'recipient countries designing their poverty reduction strategies while improving domestic institutions and combatting corruption' (OECD 2005). However, much like the experience following the Rome Declaration, in practice, this principle revealed the general perception and acceptance that the ownership in question referred to recipient government ownership (Besson 2009). This was followed by the Accra Agenda for Action in 2008, which rearticulated the principle to emphasize the necessity of including civil society in development processes and the usage of recipient-country fiduciary systems by development partners (OECD 2008b).

In 2011, following the fourth HLF in Busan, South Korea, understanding of country ownership was adapted to the evolving landscape of international development financing, paving the way for the establishment of the GPEDC to nurture increased inclusivity of development actors. As such the principle was rephrased as: 'Partnerships for development can only succeed if they are led by developing countries, implementing approaches that are tailored to country-specific situations and needs' (OECD 2011). The explicit mention of partnerships and recipient leadership is recognized as leaving 'no space for donors to ignore the perspectives of recipient countries' (Rahman 2021: 359). The aspect of ownership as a prerequisite for attaining both improved and sustainable development outcomes was further reinforced in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda[5] (UN DESA 2015).

[4] The indicators presented in connection with assessing recipient-country ownership included three qualitative proxy indicators comprising: (i) Quality of country national development strategies (Indicator 1); (ii) Quality of country public financial management (PFM) systems (Indicator 2a); and (iii) Quality of country public procurement systems (Indicator 2b) (OECD 2008b).

[5] The Addis Ababa Action Agenda is the document prepared following the conclusion of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 13–16 July 2015.

Figure 1: Historical milestones in shaping ‘ownership’ of development processes



Source: authors’ compilation from OECD (2005, 2008c, 2011), Hasselskog and Schierenbeck (2017), and Rahman (2021).

By the close of the second GPEDC High-Level Meeting in Nairobi, the centrality of the national government in leading the country's development strategies was once more reaffirmed with the understanding that the national parliament would review and scrutinize them. Local government and civil society would play a role alongside in encouraging transparency and accountability and would foster an enabling environment for 'inclusive participation of people to expand their democratic ownership over policies and development strategies… with an emphasis on the poor and marginalised' (GPEDC 2016).

Despite early mentions of local ownership and including recipient-country stakeholders (in addition to the government) in development processes, the successive milestones in shaping ownership have revealed that country ownership has continued to prevail as the recipient government in the 'driver's seat' of development. Stakeholders beyond development partners (e.g. civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)) have continued to participate as outsiders within recipient countries, only to be called upon in a consultative manner when needed. Notwithstanding the introduction of qualitative proxy indicators for monitoring ownership from 2005 onwards, these indicators focus more on the quality of country systems in anticipation of use by implementing bodies and, specifically, the development partners. However, the reality indicates an alternative scenario wherein the quality of country systems does not actually correlate with the frequency of use. Indeed the frequency of usage is reportedly affected by other external factors, namely the type of aid financing in consideration. Craviotto and Poel (2019) noted that loans are 'administered through country systems as opposed to grants'. As such the marginal increase in the usage of country systems can be attributed to the increase in loans in ODA over the last decade. This may be indicative of an already prevailing sentiment that country ownership and its underlying proxy indicators lend themselves to creating further vagueness surrounding the concept (Castel-Branco 2008).

The question that begs to be asked is: What are the indicators of a more 'collective' form of ownership? Research shows that true country ownership would encompass a slew of political factors including: (i) the recipient country's commitment to its development; (ii) the intellectual conviction of the recipient's key policy makers; (iii) the endorsement or support of the political leaders; and (iv) conscious and visible efforts to engage with multiple stakeholders to gain broad consensus (Kim et al. 2013).

The current GPEDC monitoring framework comprises a set of ten indicators to track the progress of stakeholders' commitment towards the four Effective Development Co-operation Principles. Five of these indicators have been designated to track the 'ownership of developing countries'.[6]

However, indicators such as 1a (Development partners use country-led results frameworks) and 1b (Countries strengthen their national results frameworks) reflect the overlapping contribution of the indicators to all four principles, particularly the 'ownership' principle, built into the monitoring framework. In this connection the following section explores the experiences of recipient countries in owning and leading their development strategies at the sectoral level, the stakeholders that have been involved and how, and the conditions under which attaining this ownership has been possible.

[6] The indicators that underpin ownership in the Global Partnership's Monitoring Framework include: Indicator 5a (Development cooperation is predictable: annual predictability); Indicator 5b (Development cooperation is predictable: medium-term predictability); Indicator 9a (Quality of countries' public financial management systems); Indicator 9b (Development partners use country systems); and Indicator 10 (Aid is untied).

3 Exploring ownership at the country level

At the country level ownership essentially means that a recipient country's national priorities play the central role in the selection, design implementation, and monitoring processes of development co-operation. This paper argues for a more meaningful and effective role of the ownership principle of the Busan Partnership agreement by introducing the concept of collective ownership. The experience of development effectiveness at the recipient-country level suggests that operationalizing collective ownership would comprise three elements. The first element involves identifying the key stakeholders (e.g., relevant government agencies of the recipient country, IDPs, local government bodies, CSOs, targeted beneficiaries, and local communities). The second requires meaningful consultation with the key stakeholders identified as regards determining the development priorities at the national, sectoral, and local levels. The third element calls for the use of a development framework that aligns itself with the priorities determined at the national, sectoral, and local levels. Hence we consider that a development co-operation initiative in a country adheres to the ownership principle adequately only when it is aligned with the recipient country's national, sectoral, and local development plans and meaningfully engages all key stakeholders at all stages, including at the selection, design implementation, and monitoring stages. From this perspective and taking account of the six aforesaid country studies, this paper discusses defining and measuring ownership, examining participation of various key stakeholders throughout the development co-operation process chain, the application of ownership in various political contexts, and the roles of key stakeholders in upholding ownership.

3.1 Defining and measuring ownership

Establishing ownership requires a definite conceptualization at the recipient country level. At present the ownership principle is limited to bringing the central government of the recipient country onboard. There is very limited recognition of other stakeholders being integral to the concept. Also, how ownership is measured varies from country to country. A review of the experience of six developing countries across three continents suggests that stakeholders can conceptualize ownership in four different ways, which can be identified as the characteristics of ownership in the context of development co-operation initiatives.

First, in some Southern countries, the level of ownership is defined through specific mention of development priorities in their policy, plan, or strategy documents. This should ensure the alignment of the development co-operation initiative with the recipient country's development priorities. However, plan, policy, and strategy documents are often sponsored and guided by the IDPs.[7] Hence, while the documents in question may be endorsed by the government agency, there may only be partial commitment at the operational level.

Second, in some Southern countries, ownership may be measured through the prism of financing arrangements. The simplest indicator in this context is increased budgetary allocations from the recipient country, either in absolute or relative terms. However, often, such increased budgetary allocations may not provide predictability. The government budget may generally increase in terms of operational expenditure but not necessarily in terms of development expenditure. Hence, the budgetary allocations may only have the life span of the development project.

This is also relevant for IDPs. The external financing flows from IDPs are usually committed for a project or programme life cycle. It is true that in many countries several IDPs finance a sector

[7] It is assumed that the IDPs operate within their democratic context and consult with their own key stakeholders.

over the medium to long term. This often assures their ownership and commitment to the specific sector in a country. However, this can also change very rapidly, sometimes due to changes in the political commitment at the headquarters of the IDPs. One of the most recent such experiences is the withdrawal of financing in many countries by the UK's former Department for International Development, which has been replaced by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). It has also been seen that financing can be increased in sector programmes but not necessarily in the sector as a whole. Hence this may signify a diversion of funds rather than increased ownership. This phenomenon may be true for both the recipient government and IDPs.

The level of ownership often determines the sustainability of project results. For example in Senegal in the context of the agriculture sector, project results are found to be ephemeral (Hathie et al. 2022). It is understood that as the IDP funding is likely to stop, the activities will also stop, and even the temporary outcomes may disappear. Indeed, there are no efforts to scale up the innovations introduced by IDP-funded projects throughout the country, primarily due to a lack of ownership by the line ministry. In contrast in Uganda, following the withdrawal of funding from the FCDO (and Irish Aid) in June 2022, the government took on responsibility for fully funding the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment programme (Kasirye et al. 2022). However, it should be noted that coverage of this programme is very low against its need.

Nevertheless, it is often seen that the IDPs that provide grants (usually the bilateral providers) demonstrate more ownership as regards the outcomes. In contrast the IDPs that provide credits (usually multilateral providers) are more interested in the process indicators (Bhattacharya et al. 2022). This suggests that the types of financing flows also influence the shape of the ownership. Even when a development co-operation initiative is fully funded by IDPs, if the recipient government is leading and it is aligned with a broader national development agenda, the recipient's ownership is upheld. For example, the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund was part of the broader Northern Uganda Reconstruction Program, and the Office of the Prime Minister in Uganda takes the lead despite the programme being fully funded by IDPs (Kasirye et al. 2022).

Third, in some countries, greater use of country systems may indicate enhanced ownership. This is relevant for both recipient countries and IDPs. There is indeed an enhanced practice of using the country system in designing and implementing development co-operation initiatives. However, the country system is sometimes not followed.

Fourth, ownership can be measured in terms of the meaningful participation of the key stakeholders. However, the extent of participation varies from country to country. It can also be the case that not all government agencies adequately participate in the development co-operation processes. Also, the participation of all the key stakeholders may not be ensured, while identifying the key stakeholders is often inadequate. Indeed, this characteristic is often found to be the weakest of the four.

To uphold the ownership principle in the development co-operation process, it is critical that all these characteristics are involved. Indeed, these characteristics—alignment with national development priorities, financing commitments, use of the country system, and participation of all key stakeholders—can meaningfully define the ownership of a development initiative from the perspective of a Southern recipient country.

3.2 Ownership at different stages of the development co-operation process

The analyses in six country studies suggest that the participation of key stakeholders varies from country to country and is linked to the capacities of Southern governments. For example in Senegal, national ownership is still weak and the dominant influence of IDPs on the projects they finance is very evident. Indeed, the Senegal government does not have the necessary capacity and tools to ensure permanent monitoring of programme execution (Hathie et al. 2022). On the other hand, in most cases, the governments in Bangladesh and Rwanda are found to be more dominant players compared to their IDP counterparts (Besharati et al. 2022; Bhattacharya et al. 2022). For example in Rwanda, the national government initiated the 'division of labour' in 2010 and implemented it in 2012, while for the education sector the CSOs are also managed under the Rwanda Education NGO Coordination Platform (Besharati et al. 2022).

When ownership is defined through the participation of all key stakeholders, the level of ownership is found to be different from country to country. However, more importantly, the participation varies at different stages of the development co-operation process. Participation is generally stronger at the selection and the design stage of the project. In most countries recipient country government agencies, IDPs and some CSOs participate at this stage. At the implementation and monitoring stages, there is almost no involvement by CSOs. Meaningful involvement of IDPs also often declines at these stages. More importantly, the feedback loop is almost absent in all the countries under review. For example in Senegal, various joint reviews were undertaken between 2014 and 2018 in the agriculture sector through inclusive dialogue between relevant stakeholders (Hathie et al. 2022). However, there was a very low level of uptake of the recommendations in the implementation of agricultural policies at a later stage, which eventually resulted in stakeholders having a reduced level of interest in such reviews.

3.3 Ownership in different political realities

The political realities in the recipient country often shape the state of ownership principle in a country and in a sector within the country. It is conventionally understood that more democratic political realities in recipient countries are likely to better facilitate the inclusive participation of all key stakeholders. This also promotes better and more transparent monitoring, review, and feedback processes compared to other recipient countries. In the context of joint dialogue involving all key stakeholders, there is less likelihood of an IDP provider disagreeing with a recipient country's government. However, in contrast, the likelihood of an IDP enforcing its own standards in the case of a development co-operation initiative increases when there is misalignment between the priorities of a recipient country and those of the IDP. Indeed, stronger recipient-country governments, in terms of being either democratic or authoritarian, are more likely to play a stronger role. However, more-authoritarian governments may ignore the roles of other stakeholders, particularly those at the national level. It is also found that the countries with better development stages have a stronger say in development co-operation initiatives. The presence of alternative and non-conventional financing sources also influences the bargaining power of recipient countries.

Political stability is also often recognized as a critical factor for successful development co-operation initiatives (Dercon 2022). The political realities also shape the development co-operation initiatives. For example in post-2019 El Salvador, the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency, which had been in charge of the technical coordination with IDPs over the preceding decade, was dissolved when there was a change in the political party in power and led to the establishment of the El Salvador Co-operation Agency under the office of the president (Sanfeliú et al. 2022). This critical strategic change was not discussed with the 'permanent three-party dialogue commission' and is an indication of the participation of key stakeholders being more limited. Political leadership is indeed a critical element for shaping development co-operation initiatives. In Tanzania the establishment of the Tanzania Social Fund was a strong political wish of the country's then president (Killian et al. 2022). The fund was initiated after the president's visit to Malawi and his exposure to the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF). The president requested the same World Bank team which had set up MASAF (Jacob and Pedersen 2018).

As development co-operation initiatives fully or partially funded by IDPs are generally considered to be public goods, it is thought that it is within the purview of the recipient government to design and utilize them as required. Hughes and Hutchinson (2012) argued that politics in the recipient country should be critically considered to ensure the effectiveness of a development co-operation initiative. Masaki (2018), citing the example of Zambia, argued that, over 16 years, IDP-funded projects were directed towards districts with substantial support for opposition parties, partly due to limited information about swing states and with an intention to generate support in the districts with weaker support for the ruling party. It is believed that the use of development co-operation for electoral political motives may weaken coordination between a recipient country's government and IDPs and may discourage use of country results frameworks, which has recently been a concern in some cases (OECD/UNDP 2019). The multiplicity arising from IDP procedures, along with the absence of harmonization with the country system, ultimately cause cost and time overruns in implementation (Hathie et al. 2022).

3.4 Role of non-state actors in establishing ownership principles

Operationalizing the ownership principle by ensuring the meaningful participation of all key stakeholders at all stages of the development co-operation chain is a collective responsibility. To this end it is the recipient government that will be in the driving seat. The government of the recipient country must ensure that all national stakeholders, including the relevant government agencies, local government, CSOs, private sector, and local communities, have adequate space at all stages.

IDPs should also encourage participation and ensure this during negotiations. It is also the responsibility of other stakeholders (e.g., local government, CSOs, private sector, and local communities) to keep pushing for their space as part of their ownership exercise. They will also need to invest in their capacities so that they can meaningfully contribute, while the IDPs and the recipient government should also support such endeavours. The capacities of recipient governments are also a key determinant for them to lead development co-operation initiatives (Hathie et al. 2022). Also, the IDPs situated at the recipient-country level should be able to negotiate with their headquarters counterparts to uphold national priorities and align IDP priorities accordingly. It is the case that almost every IDP in every recipient country has its own country programming document. Although these programming documents are generally aligned with the recipient country's priorities, the IDP is often likely to follow its own priorities (Hathie et al. 2022).

The sectoral experiences discussed thus far reveal that upholding the ownership principle greatly depends on the capacity of the recipient government and the nature of the IDP particularly to stress national development priorities in policy, programme or strategic documents, positively influence consistent key stakeholder participation at all levels in the development co-operation process, and ensure the sustainability of sector development outcomes.

4 Conclusion and recommendation

The ownership principle is undoubtedly crucial for upholding the remaining principles, but it is possibly one of the most complicated to achieve in practice. Discussions at successive high-level forums and meetings in the last two decades have continually reiterated the need for inclusivity when implementing development co-operation initiatives. However, the sectoral experiences of operationalizing country ownership have revealed that the current GPEDC framework's provisions for monitoring ownership at the country level is a rather closed-off model, often disconnected from the realities on the ground.

This paper unpacked and revisited the key elements that underpin the concept of ownership. It examined its operationalization from four angles, namely across countries and sectors, across various stages of the development co-operation process, in various political contexts, and the roles of key stakeholders.

Five key messages emerge as pertinent to shaping new views on the ownership concept in the context of effective development co-operation. The first of these is that ownership is conventionally understood to be attained through an explicit statement of development priorities in a national policy, plan, or strategy document. However, sectoral experiences reveal that, more often than not, IDPs play a key role in formulating these documents. Their involvement at this stage does not reflect whether the document has been prepared through a reasonable consultative process between the IDP's headquarters and the country office. Moreover, although preparing a policy, plan, or strategic document may indicate adequate endorsement by the recipient government, this may not be fully translated at the operational level.

Second, an increase in the share of recipient government financing in a programme/project has been used to indicate an increase in a recipient country's ownership of an initiative. However, this has been met with substantial scepticism by relevant stakeholders. As an increase in budgetary allocation may also be the result of an increase in operational expenditure rather than capital expenditure, an increase in government financing does not always reflect an increase in recipient ownership. In some cases it is considered to occur to the detriment of the sustainability of the results.

The third message relates to the declining level of inclusivity along the development co-operation process. The process can be divided into three broad stages: conceptualization and design, implementation and management, and assessment and feedback. In Southern countries the involvement of relevant key stakeholders—representing the recipient government, CSOs, NGOs, the private sector and IDPs—dominates in the first stage. While the recipient government remains in the driver's seat throughout the process, the space for the non-state actors gradually shrinks as it reaches the implementation stage. There is also a broken feedback loop, but it can be argued that this is the result of a lack of capacity and space for non-state actors to provide feedback adequately. This leaves only one foreseeable option, i.e. that actors will need to demand this space, which can only occur in an enabling institutional environment within recipient countries. In these circumstances, it is equally important for IDPs to negotiate an enabling environment for meaningful key stakeholder participation and to assess the extent to which feedback is absorbed.

Fourth, the enabling environment required for meaningful multistakeholder participation throughout the development co-operation process depends on political leadership and political stability within a recipient country. In cases where the government takes an authoritarian stance, the voices of the non-state actors are ignored. IDPs are more likely to impose their development inclinations, particularly in situations where there is misalignment between their development priorities and those of the recipient. In these cases the experiences reveal that along with an increase in alternative sources of development financing, recipient countries have also seen an increase in their bargaining power.

The case studies also point to a certain degree of disregard by providers of political economy realities within recipient countries. The expressed desire to not disrupt political relations may have played a pivotal role in diminishing IDP ownership of development co-operation processes within recipient countries. The decline in IDP ownership is further exacerbated by the inadequate exposure of IDP country offices to the GPEDC monitoring framework and its relevance, thus indicating the need to allocate staff time and to design an effective work plan to enable IDP offices to become familiar with the relevance of the GPEDC framework in recipient countries.

The reality, though, is that the roles undertaken by IDP country offices have weakened due to deviating interests at IDP headquarters as a result of increased geopolitical tensions, humanitarian crises, and constrained finances. In tandem with shrinking spaces for non-state actors, this reality has led to decreased interest in the GPEDC principles facilitating effective use of development co-operation across the board. In view of this there is a need to incentivize IDP country offices to attain desired development outcomes within a recipient country.

Finally, the fifth and potentially the most interesting message relates to the modality of development co-operation. Whether the recipient receives grants or loans, it plays a substantial role when designing the results framework and indicators for a programme or project. It was previously found that the increase in usage of recipient-country systems was concurrent with an increase in loans (as a share of ODA) disbursed through recipient-country systems (Craviotto and Poel 2019). However, in our case studies, the experiences reveal that the loan providers generally operate under pressure to disburse loans as the cost of prolonging a programme or project outweighs its benefit. Thus creditors are more lenient about achieving results than their counterparts. On the other hand the grant providers are far more inclined to exert pressure on recipient countries to achieve desired sustainable development outcomes.

Based on the sector experiences explored throughout this paper, upholding ownership involves four key elements.[8] Of the four, the extent of key stakeholder participation throughout the development co-operation process was identified as particularly critical for strengthening ownership.

A new(er) approach to ownership

Although pertinent to monitoring ownership, the current GPEDC framework indicators[9] present a very recipient-country and process-oriented approach to measuring the concept. As the evidence from consecutive GPEDC monitoring rounds has revealed, there has been a decline in the alignment between providers' and recipients' development priorities, usage of results frameworks, and the predictability of development co-operation. The findings highlight several factors beyond the purview of the current GPEDC framework but which play a critical role in delivering improved development outcomes. A particular factor is the changes at the provider-country level which spill

[8] The four elements are all focused at the recipient-country level and are: (i) the recipient government taking up the leadership role; (ii) an increase in (absolute or relative) recipient financing in a programme or project; (iii) type of ODA financing; and (iv) key stakeholder participation.

[9] The current indicators of ownership in the GPEDC monitoring framework broadly comprise obtaining the political endorsement of budgeted development cooperation, using the national results framework and recipient country systems, and attaining predictability of foreign financing.

over from geopolitical and geoeconomic issues and lead to changes in development priorities and approaches.

In this vein this paper argues that the active and substantive participation of three key stakeholder groups in successive development co-operation processes is critical to achieving ownership. It identifies 'participation' as its core basis and rearticulates the first principle as 'collective ownership' in place of 'country ownership'. Thus collective ownership is defined as the meaningful participation of key stakeholders at all stages in the development co-operation process. These key[10] stakeholders comprise: (i) the recipient country's government; (ii) international providers; and (iii) the remaining non-state actors, particularly the private sector, CSOs, and NGOs. Ensuring their meaningful participation will begin with identifying key stakeholders relevant to the process in which they may be engaged and will end with an assessment of the effectiveness of their involvement.

Provider ownership throughout the process is crucial for encouraging and ensuring key stakeholder participation. In terms of their own engagement, provider representations can be identified and engaged according to the sectoral relevance of their role in conceptualization and design, implementation and management, or results assessment and feedback processes, and their capacity to do so.

The complexity of attaining ownership to facilitate effective development co-operation requires the active and meaningful participation of multiple key stakeholders at different levels of the development co-operation process and these are aspects that must be embedded in the GPEDC monitoring framework.

References

Besharati, N., S. Uwera, and C.B. Berwa (2022). 'Impact of GPEDC Principles on Education, Training and Youth Employment in Rwanda'. [Unpublished manuscript]. Rwanda: European Commission.

Besson, P. (2009). 'Country Ownership and Aid Effectiveness: Why we All Talk About it and Mean Different Things'. Politorbis 46-1. Bern: Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. Available at: https://css.ethz.ch/content/specialinterest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/en/services/digital-library/publications/publication.html/114277 (accessed 19 September 2022).

Bhattacharya, D., and S.S. Khan (2020). 'Rethinking Development Effectiveness: Perspectives from the Global South'. Dhaka: Southern Voice. Available at: http://southernvoice.org/rethinking-development-effectiveness-perspectives-from-the-global-south/ (accessed 15 April 2022).

Bhattacharya, D., T. I. Khan, N.M. Altaf, M., Alam, and I. Kabir (2022). 'The Primary Education Sector in Bangladesh: Exploring the Effectiveness of Development Co-operation'. [Unpublished manuscript]. Bangladesh: European Commission.

Castel-Branco, C.N. (2008). 'Aid Dependency and Development: A Question of Ownership? A Critical View'. Maputo: Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos (IESE). Available at: https://www.iese.ac.mz/lib/saber/ead_34.pdf (accessed 10 September 2022).

Craviotto, N., and J.V. Poel (2019). 'Global Partnership on Effective Development Co-operation: Will This Weekend's Senior Level Meeting Turn the Tide on Effective Development?'. Brussels:

[10] The word 'key' here is used to emphasize that not all stakeholders, despite their relevance, can be engaged at all levels.

European Network on Debt and Development (EURODAD) Available at: https://www.eurodad.org/global_partnership_on_effective_development_cooperation (accessed 11 October 2022).

Dercon, S. (2022). *Gambling on Development: Why Some Countries Win and Others Lose*. London: Hurst Publishers.

Faust, J. (2010). 'Policy Experiments, Democratic Ownership and Development Assistance'. *Development Policy Review*, 28(5): 515–34. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7679.2010.00496.x

GPEDC (2016). *Nairobi Outcome Document*. Nairobi: Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation.

GPEDC (2022). *Effectiveness to Impact Initiatives: Sector Needs Assessment*. New York, NY: Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation.

Hasselskog, M., and I. Schierenbeck (2017). 'The Ownership Paradox: Continuity and Change'. *Forum for Development Studies*, 44(3): 323–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2017.1384530

Hathie, I., N. Cissé, A. Ly, L. Tall, and A. Seck (2022). 'Exploring "Development Effectiveness" at the Sectoral Level in Southern Countries: Case of Crop Production Sector in Senegal'. [Unpublished manuscript]. Senegal: European Commission.

Heaver, R., and A. Israel (1986). *Country Commitment to Development Projects*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Hughes, C., and J. Hutchison (2012). 'Development Effectiveness and the Politics of Commitment'. *Third World Quarterly*, 33(1): 17–33. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/41341209 (accessed 5 November 2022).

Jacob, T., and R.H. Pedersen (2018). 'Social Protection in an Electorally Competitive Environment (1): The Politics of Productive Social Safety Nets (PSSN) in Tanzania'. Working Paper 109. Manchester: The University of Manchester. Available at: https://www.effective-states.org/working-paper-109/ (accessed 20 October 2022).

Kasirye, I., F. Nakazi, S. Ainomugisha, and T. Akurut (2022). 'An Assessment of the Role of Busan's Effective Development Co-operation Principles in Delivering Uganda's Social Protection Sector Outcomes'. [Unpublished manuscript]. Uganda: European Commission

Keijzer, N., S. Klingebiel, C. Örnemark, and F. Scholte (2019). 'Seeking Balanced Ownership in Changing Development Cooperation Relationships'. Sweden: Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA). Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3310599# (accessed 10 April 2022)

Killian, B., W.J. Walwa, R.F. Sambaiga, and L.R. Mugisha (2022). 'Effectiveness of Development Co-operation Principles: An Inquiry into the Dimension of Health Sub-Sector under the Social Protection Programme in Tanzania'. [Unpublished manuscript]. Tanzania: European Commission

Kim, E.M., P.H. Kim, and J. Kim (2013). 'From Development to Development Co-operation: Foreign Aid, Country Ownership, and the Developmental State in South Korea'. *The Pacific Review*, 26(3): 313–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2012.759263

Masaki, T. (2018). 'The Political Economy of Aid Allocation in Africa: Evidence from Zambia'. *African Studies Review,* 61(1): 55–82. https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2017.97

OECD (1996). *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD (2003). *HLF1: The First High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, Rome*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/hlf-1thefirsthighlevelforumonaideffectivenessrome.htm (accessed 20 September 2022)

OECD (2005). *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclarationandaccraagendaforaction.htm (accessed 20 September 2022).

OECD (2008a). *2008 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD (2008b). *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action.* Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD (2008c). *The Accra Agenda for Action (AAA).* Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD (2011). *Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation: Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, Busan, Republic of Korea.* Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/54de7baa-en.

OECD (2022). *International Development Statistics Database.* Available at: https://stats.oecd.org/qwids/ (accessed 20 September 2022)

OECD/UNDP (2019). *Making Development Co-Operation More Effective: 2019 Progress Report.* Paris: OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/26f2638f-en

Rahman, M.M. (2021). 'Development Aid and the "Ownership" Principle in Development Policy'. In H. Zafarullah, and A.S. Huque (eds), *Handbook of Development Policy*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781839100871.00040

Sanfeliú, M.B., C. Gómez, G. Hernández, and Y. Sánchez (2022). 'Exploring "Development Effectiveness" at the Sectoral Level in Southern Countries: The Crop Production Sector in El Salvador'. [Unpublished manuscript]. Tanzania: European Commission.

Shimomura, Y., and I. Ohno (2005). 'Introduction and Overview'. In I. Ohno, Y. Shimomura, K. Ohno, and M. Nagasu (eds), *True Ownershup and Policy Autonomy: Managing Donors and Owning Policies.* Tokyo: GRIPS Development Forum, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies.

Stern, E., L. Altinger, O. Feinstein, M. Marañón, D. Ruegenberg, N.-S. Schulz, and N.S. Nielsen (2008). 'Thematic Study on the Paris Declaration, Aid Effectiveness and Development Effectiveness'. Copenhagen: Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Available at: https://daraint.org/dara_evaluations/thematic-study-on-the-paris-declaration-aid-effectiveness-and-development-effectiveness/ (accessed 19 September 2022).

UN DESA (2015). *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda).* Addis Ababa: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Wolfensohn, J.D. (2000). *The Comprehensive Development Framework.* Washington, DC.: The World Bank.

Woll, B. (2006). 'The Ownership Paradox: The Politics of Development Co-operation with Bolivia and Ghana'. London: London School of Economics and Political Science. Available at http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/856/ (accessed 11 October 2022).

Appendix

This paper utilizes the findings of the research project 'Exploring "Development Effectiveness" at the Sectoral Level in Southern Countries'. The research project was carried out in 2022 and was led by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh and the Group for the Analysis of Development (GRADE), Peru, at the Secretariat of Southern Voice and funded by the European Commission. The relevant information on the case studies is presented below.

Table A1: List of case studies and respective authors

Country	Sector/subsector	Authors	Institution
Bangladesh	Primary education	Debapriya Bhattacharya, Towfiqul Islam Khan, Najeeba Mohammed Altaf, Marfia Alam, Ifaz Kabir	Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh
Tanzania	Social protection	Bernadeta Killian, William J. Walwa, Richard F. Sambaiga, Lucius R. Mugisha	University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Rwanda	Secondary technical, vocational and higher education	Neissan Besharati, Sifa Uwera, Christian Shema Berwa	Independent consultants
El Salvador	Agriculture	Margarita Beneke de Sanfeliú, Carlos Gómez, Gloria Hernández, Yessica Sánchez	Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUSADES), El Salvador
Senegal	Crop production	Ibrahima Hathie, Ndiaya Cissé, Ahmadou Ly, Laure Tall, Alassane Seck	Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale (IPAR), Senegal
Uganda	Social protection	Ibrahim Kasirye, Florence Nakazi, Smartson Ainomugisha, Tiffany Akurut	Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC), Uganda

Source: authors' compilation.