SUMMARY OF THE 6TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONS PLATFORM (EIP)

14-15 December 2020

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SUMMARY

On 14-15 December 2020, EIP members and partners gathered virtually for the 6th annual meeting of the EIP. Focused on the theme "*Knowledge sharing and learning in times of crisis and transformation - a platform fit-for-purpose?",* the meeting brought together 42 representatives from Government, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), bilateral and multilateral organisations to review progress and achievements to date, and to discuss the direction and possible focus areas of the EIP in 2021.

 The meeting had two overarching objectives:

i.   Report on progress related to the current work plan, strategic focus and governance arrangements of the EIP;
ii.   Agree on pathways to reposition the EIP in light of the changing operating environment, solicit ideas to inform the new work plan, and discuss strategies for reinvigorating the platform through an active, diverse and relevant membership.

Held in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was organised in a virtual setting during two afternoons (CET), with discussions structured around six sessions. The meeting agenda is attached as Annex A.

This report provides a summary of the meeting discussions. It will be shared with members and published on the EIP website (www.effectiveinstitutions.org). Key messages and takeaways are highlighted under the respective sessions below. The main takeaways will be presented by the Secretariat to the Co-Chairs and the Advisory Group at the first Advisory Group meeting in 2021, for validation, and where relevant, operationalisation through the formulation of specific action points.

DAY I

Opening remarks

In his opening remarks, the Director of the OECD's Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD), Jorge Moreira da Silva, focused on the relevance of institutions in times of crisis, introduced the principle achievements of the EIP since the 2019 Annual Meeting and reflected on considerations to keep in mind for the future of the EIP.

Opening and introductions by the Co-Chairs

Ms. Karin Metell Cueva, Head of the Capacity Development Unit in the Department for Partnerships and Innovation of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and Mr. Neil Cole, Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative (CABRI)'s Executive Secretary presented reflections on the main themes of the annual meeting, its objectives and highlighted achievements from the past year.

Session I: EIP activities and achievements 2019-2020

The session was moderated by Ms. Rose Wanjiru, Executive Director of the Centre for Economic Governance (CEG), Kenya. The Secretariat presented an Annual Update on achievements since the last Annual Meeting in April 2019 (see attached document).

Ms. Catherine Anderson (Team Lead, Governance and Development, EIP Secretariat) highlighted that the EIP is working to situate itself as a knowledge hub for P2P learning and aims to facilitate new learning for P2P and other approaches. She further elaborated on the EIP's history as the EIP was established to assist with the implementation of the development effectiveness agenda with work from 2012 onwards involving piloting the use of country systems, change management and measuring development effectiveness. However, from 2016 onwards, there has been a greater focus on P2P learning. The EIP has provided direct support through seed funding for a select number of P2P partnerships and has developed a learning guide on P2P learning, synthesising literature on good practice approaches. In the period since the last annual meeting, the EIP has sought to enhance knowledge and learning on P2P ways of working with a view to distil what makes P2P partnerships work and in what contexts. Ms. Catherine Anderson then summarised the key achievements of the EIP; provided a brief overview of the EIP's governance arrangements which include (i) two Co-Chairs, (ii) an Advisory Group with ten members (including the Co-Chairs) and (iii) and a membership of roughly 60+ EIP members. The Terms of Reference, which describe the roles and functions of these governing bodies can be found on the EIP website.

Among EIP deliverables, Ms. Anderson referenced:

(a) mapping of P2P initiatives (specifically, P2P alliances, knowledge hubs and community of practices) which was undertaken to better understand the EIP's potential niche, and which identified 78 partnerships in total, of which 43 were explicitly P2P. Each of these initiatives had some level of focus on core government or public administration functions.

(b) Initiated the preparation and delivery of a series of learning events with two events: a donor-learning event and an event on the importance of trust building and mutuality, convened in 2020.

(c) Preparation and publication of a stocktaking report (*'Lessons Harvesting: Learning from P2P Engagements – Discussion Paper for a Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Framework'*) in December 2020, as a precursor to the development of a MEL framework for the EIP that could be used as a model for others.

Outcomes of the EIP's work in 2019 and 2020 include:

(i) a **new strategic direction** with new thinking on other types of partnerships and collaborations to achieve SDG16 , which was summarised in the Strategic Focus Note in 2019;

(ii) **stronger commitment to distilling results on P2P partnerships**;

(iii) the generation of **new insights and learning on the effective ingredients of effective P2P learning**;

(iv) **enhanced outreach and engagement** of the Secretariat with the Advisory Group as well as new and more active partnerships that are emerging;

(v) i**mproved prospects for collaboration** (i.e. GPEDC) as the GPEDC are currently refreshing its monitoring and tracking framework while the DAC has started a process to look at its commitment to the Busan agenda to try to enhance results; and

(vi) **more sustainable resourcing** with four financing partners.

Session II: Showcasing the revamped EIP website

Mr. Fredrik Bruhn, from the EIP Secretariat, presented a demo version of the redeveloped website of the EIP (work in progress) which is being undertaken in three phases: (i) updating of the design and feel of the website, (ii) introduction of new features and elements and (iii) updating content. Members were subsequently invited to provide feedback and proposals at a later time.

Session III: Towards a framework for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) in the context of P2P initiatives for institutional reform

This session provided an opportunity for the EIP Secretariat to present the work so far on developing a MEL framework for P2P learning and to receive comments and reflections from members.

The moderator, Dr. Leila Brosnan (International Advisor, Learning, Global Learning, Government Partnerships International), introduced Ms. Charlotte Ornemark (MEL consultant) who presented some initial findings of the stock taking report '*Lessons Harvesting: Learning from P2P Engagements – Discussion Paper for a Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Framework'*, articulated around four guiding questions:

- What matters in P2P learning (=what to monitor)?
- Why is MEL in P2P learning powerful?
- What makes tracking institutional effects of P2P learning hard?
- How can we collectively try to make it easier?

Ms. Ornemark highlighted that P2P learning can lead to institutional strengthening. Although learning happens between individuals, it is used in systems or contexts that affect patterns of behaviour. Institutions are often either enabling or stifling change, and the uptake of new knowledge and ability to adapt to changing contexts. The importance of adopting a systems perspective and tracking institutional capabilities rather than focusing on activities and outputs is therefore crucial. In this regard, one of the aims is to better understand how P2P approaches contribute alongside other efforts to build core capabilities. Ms. Ornemark emphasised that we are trying to build a case for MEL going beyond compliance in order to support institutional strengthening, before speaking in more detail about the 'bubbles of wisdom' thus far derived from participating AG organisations which are harvested results of their existing P2P partnerships.

In explaining why MEL is powerful in a P2P context, Ms. Ornemark stressed that MEL should not be seen as an add-on but should be embedded in the P2P learning process. MEL can create stronger and

comparative evidence by having a common framework for the ways in which we document P2P learning with regard to institutional strengthening. MEL also allows practitioners to build a case for when and under what circumstances P2P learning may be a viable alternative to expert TA.

MEL also allows program staff to track the mutuality and health of the partnership to see if common understanding leads to trust building and translates into results. Furthermore, MEL has a role in unpacking and better documenting the role of intermediaries and facilitators of P2P processes. Facilitators play a crucial role as the matching process is time consuming, quite invisible and yet is so incredibly important. Finally, MEL may help us understand how P2P learning supports local ownership and can help to unleash local leadership.

Ms. Ornemark indicated that tracking the institutional effects of P2P learning is hard for a number of reasons including: (i) different types of P2P partnerships use different triggers for learning with certain cost implications; (ii) learning cannot be assumed to happen as anticipated which is why MEL is needed; (iii) efforts are not immediately visible with the significance of smaller behavioural or attitude change not always being clear and (iv) P2P is only one aspect of broader change processes each of which have their own deliverables and results frameworks. This explains why MEL should be embedded in the P2P process from the outset with functions distributed across all partners involved.

The EIP provides a platform to share ideas and tools to draw upon, test and adapt. The next step is to work with EIP members to pilot and share ideas on MEL in P2P partnerships.

Discussants:

Ms. Preeta Lall, from the Login Asia Secretariat, argued that it is important to come up with a body of knowledge to indicate the situations in which P2P is a better methodology (i.e. more attractive and cost effective) than other more traditional modalities. Ms. Lall also wondered how best to capture the quality of the partnerships, as this dictates how the two institutions might proceed in building capacities, challenging each other and bringing good practices to each other. If the relationship is not strong enough, there will be issues with sustainability and the lessons that are recalled. It is also difficult to capture the capability enhancements in institutions (they were often good at matchmaking, identifying capability and information asymmetries but trying to understand what the P2P partnership is doing and changing the institution is challenging for both partners). Additionally, it is difficult to attribute what is achieved as a result of the P2P partnership.

Mr. Steffen Soulejman Janus highlighted that having MEL embedded in P2P learning is essential to make the case for why learning is crucial (i.e. what are its benefits). The other point is what are we measuring and where does this take us? Making the link between learning and action/results is very difficult to measure but is at the crux of the P2P experience. Gaining more clarity on the results chain is crucial and there will be a need to collect more quantitative and qualitative data to achieve this goal. Another takeaway was that more long-term thinking was needed in regard to MEL and P2P learning. This would in turn affect the design of activities and MEL. Mr. Soulejman Janus also talked about the 'how to' with regard to the link between the supply and demand side of peer learning. This is where the role of the facilitator comes in to decide what we want to get out of P2P learning. Finally, he brought in the World Bank's three-layer approach to learning with: (i) internal knowledge (i.e. getting institutions ready for this institutional process); (ii) the domestic (i.e. facilitate peer learning in-country at sub-national and local level where service delivery happens) and (iii) international side (i.e. when you measure in-country learning, you can then do international P2P learning).

> **Key takeaways:**
> - *MEL can help capture the ways in which P2P learning can contribute to institutional strengthening notably by adopting a systems approach rather than focusing on individual learning.*
> - *Embedding MEL in P2P learning rather than treating it as an add-on is crucial.*
> - *Adopting a longer term reflective approach focusing on the 'how' rather than the 'what' (outcomes/impact) is key.*
> - *Starting with the domestic and local level for learning from P2P partnerships and building your way up to the international level through an effective results monitoring process is crucial.*
> - *Capturing the health of peers in the partnership is key to ensure building of capacities, bringing good practices and sustainability.*
> - *Capturing capability enhancements in peers is crucial but remains challenging to measure.*

Discussion:

In the discussions that followed, members recognised that P2P partnership members could be broadly divided into two different groups: (i) those seeing it as an opportunity for capacity building and (ii) others wanting to get something specific out of the peer learning exercise (e.g. better understanding of policy design and/or implementation). Each group takes away a different lesson and capability with the first group transmitting knowledge at the individual level while the second group was able to link takeaways from the learning event with changes in impact and output. It may be interesting for the EIP Secretariat to analyse the two models and define what works for each of them.

Three areas were subsequently highlighted as being unique to P2P learning: (i) the emphasis on trust and mutuality, (ii) institutional as opposed to individual level engagements (systems thinking) and (iii) local ownership and how P2P can improve this way of working. All these are areas in which the EIP will be organising specific learning events.

Members indicated that the pandemic is a time of change and ways of working will need to be recrafted. This will entail greater embedment of localisation (with P2P learning as a potential way forward) given that the default since the pandemic has been to rely on local forms of partnership and indigenous knowledge. Another important aspect is to gain a better understanding of the baseline we are working with (i.e. what is our benchmark for measurement), to clearly identify what we are trying to learn, and to pinpoint the problem we are trying to solve and choose tools that can help us achieve this objective.

Members also discussed the issue of how citizen engagement and CSO's feature in MEL for P2P partnerships. The use of design thinking (taking small steps, making a prototype and testing it) in public sector approaches by involving civil society inputs as an intermediary was also discussed (for the end users who are the public).

> **Key takeaways:**
> - *P2P partnerships exist in different varieties and have diverse participant 'ideal type' groups (some participants are more solution-oriented; others see the exercise as akin to capacity building).*

> - *Three unique areas of P2P partnerships are to be further unpacked: (i) trust and mutuality; (ii) learning through interconnected systems and (iii) local ownership.*
> - *There is a need to shift from focusing on outputs/results to looking at what is working and what is not through the partnership, through a more reflective approach, and on an ongoing basis.*
> - *The COVID-19 pandemic has altered ways of working but also offers opportunities for greater localisation and rethinking current ways of working.*

Next steps:

The next steps includes the EIP Secretariat organising a second learning event on interconnected systems of learning (11 February 2021), a third learning event on localised learning in March/April and pilot testing new tools with members being asked to share tools and approaches.

DAY II

Opening session

The Co-Chair, Mr. Neil Cole, opened Day 2 by thanking members for the high level of engagement during the previous day and presented the agenda for Day 2.

Session IV: Managing for Mission - Putting People at the Center of Performance

The session was designed as an opportunity for discussion and learning among participants, focused around a presentation by Professor Dan Honig (Assistant Professor of International Development, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies) on his ongoing research on "Mission-Driven Bureaucrats".

The moderator, Karin Metell Cueva (EIP Co-Chair, Head of Capacity Development Unit, Department for Partnerships and Innovation, SIDA), initiated the session, outlined the main theme and introduced Prof Honig.

Prof Honig argued that, currently, many public sector reform efforts are suffering from what can be termed "obsessive measurement and control disorder": the view that bureaucrats and employees will only perform if they are induced to do so, typically by introducing more targets, stricter controls and tighter monitoring. Much of the evidence, however, indicates that a more effective way to improve performance – particularly among public sector workers who are often intrinsically motivated – may be through supportive management practices, such as autonomy and feedback, which enhance mission motivation[1]. Supportive management practices can lead to more mission-driven public bureaucracies by boosting motivation among current employees, retaining those already (intrinsically) motivated, and attracting more intrinsically motivated (future) employees. Evidence also shows that teams, peer support and exchange may have similar positive effects on motivation.

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[1] For example studies on infrastructure in Nigeria, procurement and health workers in Pakistan, and across the public sector in Ghana.

Prof Honig highlighted a number of implications for the EIP and P2P initiatives, principally the opportunity to repurpose P2P initiatives as mechanisms for building communities of mission-driven peers (rather than primarily facilitating knowledge transfer). Consequently, MEL frameworks and approaches would have to be designed to capture progress in sustaining motivation and the retention of intrinsically motivated bureaucrats.

In conclusion, Mr Honig mentioned the Practitioner Circles initiative to be launched in 2021 – a set of small, facilitated, online peer support communities to be hosted by the Johns Hopkins Agora Institute – aiming to test some of the ideas mentioned. EIP members were encouraged to express their interest.

Discussion

Members offered broad support for the observation that there is often a high level of intrinsic motivation among public sector bureaucrats, and that such motivation can be triggered and sustained through peer exchange. Members debated several issues related to this insight, including the need to attract the 'right' people (those who are, or can become, intrinsically motivated) to P2P initiatives; the opportunities offered by the shift to virtual learning settings in the COVID-19 era; and the risk of donors engaged in civil service reform suffocating motivation, by introducing financial incentives to participate in learning activities, and by applying tight measurement and target-setting practices.

Members discussed the relationship between intrinsic motivation and the problem of low civil service salaries. While remuneration levels clearly impact motivation, it is not the only factor. P2P exchange can potentially function as a diagnostic tool, to complement political economy analysis, and can be applied to understand the wider reform environment (i.e. why people are demotivated and how to support effective and motivated leadership). However, consideration needs to be paid to the conditions and contexts in which P2P can be useful, including when and where it is most effectively and efficiently applied.

Several members praised Mr Honig for reclaiming the word 'bureaucrat', and giving it a positive connotation.

> *Key takeaways:*
> - *Public sector workers – bureaucrats – often do or can care about the mission of the organization, i.e. they are or can be intrinsically motivated.*
> - *Cultivating mission motivation through supportive management practices often leads to better outcomes.*
> - *Peer support programs are a potentially important tool to sustain intrinsic motivation, but should include thorough diagnostics and analysis of the reform context, the reasons for demotivation and potential barriers to effective targeting and selection of peers.*

Session V: EIP Futures

The objective of the session was to discuss how best to optimise the EIP's unique value in the 2021-2022 biennium. The discussion took place in light of the EIP's two strategic objectives: to act as a global knowledge hub on peer-to-peer learning approaches, and to facilitate innovation and learning on alternative approaches to public sector reform and institutional development.

The session was opened by the Co-Chairs, followed by an introduction by Ms. Catherine Anderson, (Team Lead, Governance and Development, EIP Secretariat) on the session objectives and format.

The session was structured around three potential areas of focus, derived from exchanges with EIP members and partners, that could be relevant and add value to the EIP and its members:

i. The implications of **COVID-19** for the EIP, P2P approaches and the diffusion of learning;
ii. Capitalising on the EIP's knowledge and partnerships, to support reform in areas of core government functions and/or to develop **new and innovative partnerships** for engagement;
iii. Engagement with the **development effectiveness** narrative and the ongoing review of the GPEDC monitoring framework.

See Annex C for the session background note.

To provide additional context to topic three, Ashley Palmer (Policy Analyst, OECD-DCD and the GPEDC Secretariat), introduced the work of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), the ongoing review of its monitoring exercise, and the internal process of the DAC to revitalize its work on effective development cooperation.

See Annex D for a background note on the GPEDC and its monitoring exercise.

Participants were divided into **three groups** corresponding to the three topics for discussion. Each group assigned a facilitator and rapporteur to report back to the plenary.

Theme 1: *How does COVID-19 and the new 'virtual reality' impact our ability to learn and diffuse knowledge? Are there effective ways development actors can partner to deliver positive institutional development outcomes in this environment? What, if any role could the EIP play in disseminating or modelling new learning?*

Summary of discussions

In the context of a global crisis, with development assistance approaches being overwhelmed, there is a clear need for P2P learning. A need that may grow further in the post-COVID-19 recovery period. The new online environment offers both opportunities and challenges. It reduces barriers to bringing people together, making it easier for people in far off locations to engage. On the other hand, it is more difficult to create trust in online settings, and questions regarding inclusion remain, given high cost and poor reliability of connections in some locations.

The EIP would be well placed to explore innovative ways to incorporate remote learning modalities in P2P initiatives. This would be essential to its function as a knowledge hub and could include reviews of possible usages of various technologies, as well as developing methodologies for interaction and networking that in turn build relationships. Increased outreach will be important for the EIP and should be complemented by an exploration of additional tools and channels that could facilitate growth.

Theme 2: *How could the EIP leverage its value add to strengthen its focus on and support to the reform of core government functions, and what, if any opportunities, exist to develop new and innovative partnerships for engagement?*

Summary of discussions

In order to articulate its value add, the EIP needs to sharpen its focus on P2P learning, primarily by building evidence and knowledge on the benefits of P2P approaches, collecting more examples, case studies and tools. The ongoing work on an MEL framework is an important step in this direction. A

related strategy is to recognise and build on the diversity of the members, by further mapping and getting to know the members.

The EIP may also need to get a better understanding of new potential partners. The existing mapping of P2P initiatives is a good starting point but may need to be deepened. This would also serve to clarify what kind of partnerships would be most relevant to engage with (i.e. academic, practitioner, regional or local alliances, platforms and networks). Other relevant constituencies could include those directly dealing with the current (fiscal and health) crisis.

Members debated the merits of narrowing versus broadening the EIP's thematic focus. The Secretariat highlighted that the current focus on public sector reform and core government functions should be understood in light of the EIP's ambitious agenda in the 2012-2016 period. One member raised the importance of narrowing the focus, arguing that this may still include members with different public sector mandates. It was agreed that the EIP needs to set modest ambitions, as a global network with limited resources, working through a diverse range of members and partners.

Theme 3: *How and what might the EIP contribute to the review of the development effectiveness agenda within the DAC, and the overhaul of the GPEDC monitoring exercise, and what would be the value add for EIP members?*

Summary of discussions

Reflecting on the role of the EIP, several members suggested that the EIP would be well placed to support horizontal knowledge sharing and skills transfer, particularly through south-south modalities. The EIP is one of few remaining platforms related to the DAC that has a clear multi-stakeholder approach, with members from the Global North and the Global South. As such it is an important forum for the development effectiveness conversation.

One area of focus could be the use of country systems, for example by sharing experience and good practices on alignment to national development plans and on domestic resource mobilisation.

Another area of contribution could be through the reform of the indicators of the GPEDC's monitoring framework – to review the extent to which P2P and other alternative approaches are adequately considered. The EIP's ongoing work on MEL might generate relevant insights in this regard.

Key takeaways
As an outcome of the discussions members agreed on the following:
- *The COVID-19 crisis underscores the need for P2P learning, and the EIP is well placed to explore innovative remote learning modalities and technologies. Increased outreach and a clear value proposition will be key.*
- *To strengthen its value add, the EIP should (i) keep collecting practical evidence, examples and tools demonstrating the benefits of P2P approaches; (ii) deepen engagement with and leverage the diversity of its members; (iii) scope potential partners beyond the membership.*
- *As one of few multi-stakeholder platforms related to the DAC with members from the Global North and South, the EIP is well placed to contribute to the development effectiveness discourse, through focus areas such as south-south and triangular cooperation and the use of country systems.*
- *The EIP could contribute to the reform of the GPEDC's monitoring framework by reviewing the extent to which P2P and alternative approaches to enhance skills and capabilities are reflected.*

Session VI: Outlook 2021 and Closing

In their closing remarks, the Co-Chairs thanked participants for their active engagement during the meeting, highlighted some of the main achievements of the previous year, and emphasized key milestones ahead for 2021. The Co-Chairs recognized the importance of the increased financial stability of the EIP, which will allow the continued delivery of the work plan over the next year.

Reflecting on the themes of the previous session, the Co-Chairs emphasized, first, the relevance of the EIP to the development effectiveness agenda, and vice versa. The EIP was born out of the Busan Agenda, and the Secretariat's location within the OECD-DAC offers opportunities for direct engagement with the refresh on development effectiveness. Second, there are ample opportunities for the EIP to explore how P2P approaches may contribute to the COVID-19 response and recovery. Third, a priority of 2021 will be to increase outreach efforts, to boost engagement within the partnership and beyond. This involves leveraging the diversity of the current membership, as well as increased outreach to new prospective members and partners.

The Secretariat joined the Co-Chairs in expressing its gratitude to members for the vibrant exchange throughout the meeting, and reiterated the importance of active member engagement, for example through the new website, continued learning events and the activities related to the development of the MEL framework. The Secretariat will reach out to members in due course with a request to pilot some of the MEL tools developed.

Key takeaways:
The Co-Chairs summarised the proposed way forward as follows:
- *Key milestones and work streams in 2021 will include the launch of the new website, the continued learning event series and the development of the MEL framework.*
- *The three themes discussed in session V will be further explored by the Secretariat as part of the work plan delivery in 2021.*
- *The Secretariat will increase outreach and engagement with members and non-member partners as a crosscutting priority in 2021. Members are encouraged to take an active part and support these efforts.*

ANNEXES

Annex A: Meeting agenda

Annex B: Annual Update 2019-2020

Annex C: Session V Background Note

Annex D: Background Note GPEDC