P2P Donor Learning Event, Monday 4 May 2020

Summary Report

(Final version 22 June 2020)

Summary of topics discussed

Discussions during the Event centred around some key questions such as:
- Why use peer-to-peer-to-peer (P2P) techniques to drive institutional reform?
- Can development challenges be more readily overcome through P2P approaches, as compared with other channels or forms of ODA delivery?
- What is known about the extent to which P2P approaches can serve to build individual and organisational capabilities?
- How can sharing mutual experiences and expertise contribute to individual and in turn organisational learning?

On Monday 4th of May 34 participants, representing 14 organisations and donor agencies from the Global North and South, came together for a donor learning event on Peer to Peer approaches to support institutional development (see the attached recipient list). The Event was co-hosted and organised jointly by Government Partnership International (GPI), the Effective Institutions Platform (EIP) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). A two-hour learning workshop, the event was held virtually via Zoom with technical support provided by the Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation/Development Cooperation Directorate (OECD/DCD).

The event was structured around six presentations by donor agencies on the experiences of building and/or supporting P2P partnerships, focusing on particular 'success' stories, key challenges and lessons learned, followed by breakout sessions with discussions on key topics. Development practitioners from OECD-DAC donor agencies and multilateral organisations were the principal target for this event. A select few partner alliances already using peer-peer learning for institutional development also participated.

Outcomes

The objective of the Event was to provide an opportunity for development practitioners to exchange knowledge and learning on how donors can support P2P and institutional twinning, and to identify communalities and differences in approach, strategies for effectively measuring results, and any opportunities or constraints that agencies have faced in terms of enabling and scaling up P2P and institutional twinning approaches or methods. The Event also provided an opportunity for the P2P community to identify common P2P interests or agendas, and to raise the profile of P2P as a common way of working.

The point of departure for the discussion was the recognition that experience suggests that peer-to-peer and alternative or innovative approaches that support institutional development could make an important contribution to the current discourse on aid effectiveness and provides an opportunity to *'do development differently'* by strengthening local ownership and departing from traditional models of donor-driven technical assistance (TA). Furthermore, there is a consensus emerging on the importance of trust, humility, long-term commitment, working politically and on adaptive management and local ownership, which is often seen as intrinsic to peer-to-peer learning.

Despite this, many questions about peer-to-peer learning still remain relevant in terms of the modality's effectiveness and sustainability such as:

- how and when to use this aid modality?
- what are the critical ingredients for its success?
- how might P2P approaches differ under different country conditions?
- how can peer-learning models be scaled up by development actors?

Key takeaways and conclusions

Discussions among participants were lively and raised both challenges and opportunities with P2P as a modality for institutional development. Participants also signalled that they would welcome the opportunity to meet more regularly to exchange knowledge and learning, and share practical experiences. The EIP could be used as some form of coordinating mechanism for such knowledge sharing as well as to collect and disseminate evidence of success stories, new methods and key challenges, not least when it comes to tracking results. It was recognised that the Event itself was proof that P2P is an effective tool for knowledge sharing and an opportunity for participants to learn together. A catch-phrase of discussions was the idea that "we share experiences, we don't share solutions". The Event was also evidence of a growing community of practice both among donors and developing country partners; including government representatives.

The increased importance of using P2P approaches to coordinate Covid-19 responses was also touched upon. Many participants flagged the way that they are having to either repurpose or reprioritise their work in response to the Covid-19 crisis In many ways Covid-19 represents an opportunity to test the P2P model in a new context.

The **main takeaways** of the meeting can be summarised as follows.

1. P2P can enable development actors to go beyond technical assistance to build trust, transfer knowledge (the 'what') and transfer practical insights (the 'how to').

P2P approaches are a means to go beyond traditional technical assistance, transferring knowledge but also sharing working methods between peers. The difference between TA and P2P is that P2P is builds trust, and mutuality.

Participants further asked: Are P2P approaches the same in every context; what do we know about when P2P is the best modality and when it is not? How does mutual learning and partnership happen? Several donors remarked that many of their domestic agencies have reportedly learnt a lot from working with developing country partners. Does collaboration between like-minded individuals of similar expertise act as a leveller? Are some sectors or technical fields, such as statistics, more readily amendable to P2P partnerships and collaboration?

Participants agreed that P2P is one of many tools that can assist to achieve the goal of building capable institutions but it is far from the only tool. Some donors use P2P alongside or as part of other complementary tools such as budget support, international training programs or as a vehicle for South-South exchanges. Others also embed technical experts or provide top-level political and strategic support within the partner institutions. P2P can enable donors and partner countries to ensure public reforms take root as it provides a set of tools that can shift from individual to organisational support, and influence soft norms and behaviour. Both the demand and the supply side of the partnership are equally important, and exploring opportunities for internal domestic learning (between institutions in-country), could provide valuable entry points.

2. Peer to Peer approaches can enhance aid effectiveness and thus directly contribute towards Agenda 2030 attainment and the delivery of development through a whole of government approach.

To optimise the benefits of P2P, it is helpful to ask, under what conditions development challenges can be more readily overcome through P2P approaches, as compared with other channels or forms of ODA delivery.

In terms of the contribution of P2P, it can be used as a modality to enhance aid effectiveness and contribute to reaching the Agenda 2030 and the Whole of Government approach. P2P can also play a crucial role at the multilateral level, as it answers the call of, 'global challenges needing global responses'. P2P can contribute to organisational changes processes and a willingness to learn from the past, learning what works and more systematically think about measuring results.

Nonetheless, we need to ask ourselves to what extent do P2P approaches serve to build individual and organisational capabilities. What do we know about the conditions under which such learning occurs? How can effective matchmaking be undertaken and how can and should these partnerships be facilitated?

Participants agreed that there is a need to develop the P2P modalities, and there is a need for a more structured approach and for making a cultural shift from doing to mentoring. Donors may also need capacity building, and need to explore to which extent they themselves have competence in listening, learning and adapting.

A particular challenge many donors and partners are struggling with is how to ensure the delivery <u>and</u> sustainability of results. The EIP is currently harvesting the results of existing partnership and learning alliances to better understand how partners have captured results to date, including the methods used and results achieved. The purpose of this work is both to better understand how change happens (at the individual and organisational level) for the purposes of SDG16 attainment and to produce an analytic framework, and complementary tools, to assist the EIP and existing and future P2P partnerships/alliances in their monitoring, evaluation and learning activities.

3. P2P is a long-term relationship-building process, which has the best prospects for success where it is problem-driven, agile/flexible and adaptive.

In discussing the conditions for successful P2P learning, members observed that P2P is a long-term relationship building process, where demand and supply are equally important. Participants also agreed that P2P would need to be problem-driven, flexible, agile and adaptive in order to remain relevant, and there are several ways in which this could be achieved, including by looking at critical junctures, such as the Covid-19 crisis, ensuring partner governments are responsible for setting the terms of the partnership (ie. identifying the reforms they are seeking to address, and the expertise they want).

Donors, in turn, have crucial a role to play in identifying like-minded expertise (technical and cultural) and acting as a broker between the parties. Ensuring local ownership and findings ways in which to cope with or respond to the political dimension of institutional change and public sector reform will also be important. Experience has shown that P2P approaches in-country (national and subnational) can provide effective entry points for local ownership and engagement and a means of enabling P2P learning and experience-sharing domestically before scaling up to a regional or international P2P partnership.

4. As a long-term change management process, measurement and attribution of P2P results can be a problem.

Participants asked themselves: What are the challenges ahead when developing P2P modalities, how might it respond to or remain relevant in the context of a global crisis, such as COVID-19? As a long – term change management process, and measuring and attributing results of the P2P partnership to particular outcomes is difficult. Sharing knowledge of how best to track results thus becomes very important. Another crucial issue for donors is how to demonstrate that P2P is cost-effective, particularly given this modality is fairly labour intensive for the funding agency?

5. How do we create a P2P learning community?

In discussing how to create a P2P learning community, members asked: Where do we go from here? One option is to give greater emphasis to multilateral approaches on P2P and work to leverage one another's comparative advantages in this field.

Participants agreed that, given the diversity of approaches, there is much to be gained through P2P partnerships and learning and it helps that P2P approaches mean that partners are in it for the long run. Donors could also do a better job of learning from one another.

The role of the EIP was also recognised as was the importance of its Secretariat being embedded in the OECD/DAC. EIP is a unique tool for the OECD/DAC and the EIP itself is a P2P partnership for learning

on institutional development. OECD/DAC is one of the few fora, if not the only one, that can address aid effectiveness across the donor community, and which is conducive to maintaining and developing a community of practice and dialogue across countries on P2P.

6. How can P2P contribute to the Covid-19 responses?

The COVID-19 crisis reinforces the value of P2P learning and demonstrates we can and should use existing partnerships for supporting responses to the crisis. An issue to discuss further will be how institutions can better respond to the crisis and how they can learn from the example of others (ie. like-minded institutions and organisations). This subject will be the theme of a subsequent meeting on June 10th.

Annexes: List of participants
            Agenda