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**DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE
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MORE EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION FOR LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

DAC Perspectives on Effective Development Co-operation

This document is submitted for INFORMATION to inform user-friendly DAC tools to support DAC members implement their long-standing effectiveness commitments in view of the rapidly evolving global architecture of development co-operation and diverse national contexts.

This secretariat note sets out an overview of challenges and practices across the DAC in relation to the effectiveness principles and their application to deliver on the pledge of LNOB.

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1 Effective development co-operation and leaving no one behind

The 2030 Agenda pledges to meet the goals and targets for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society, endeavouring to reach the furthest behind first (UN, 2015^[1]). The approach to leave no one behind (LNOB) seeks to reach the poorest of the poor, and combat discrimination and rising inequalities, as well as tackling their root causes. LNOB is underpinned by equality and non-discrimination, both core principles in International Human Rights Law. The terms 'poor', and 'poverty' are considered not just in terms of income and wealth but relate to deprivations in other areas as well. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 10.2 aims explicitly for *“Every person to have a fair opportunity in life to enable them to reach their full potential by empowering and promoting the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status.”*

LNOB requires to broaden the focus of ending extreme poverty to encompass the need to also reduce inequality - both within and among countries - and combat social exclusion and discrimination against marginalised groups within society. In summary, it implies all UN member states to take interrelated but distinct measures to:

1. **End extreme poverty** - in all its forms - and allow the left behind (in relative or absolute terms) to catch up with those who have made progress;
2. **Reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities** that undermine a person's ability to escape poverty;
3. **End group-based discrimination** that leads to unequal outcomes for the marginalised (OECD, 2018^[2]);
4. **Address the specific needs of vulnerable countries**, including least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and fragile contexts (OECD, 2022^[3]) (OECD, 2020^[4]); and
5. **Prioritise** and fast-track every form of action for **the poorest and most disadvantaged** (OECD, 2018^[5]).

Leaving no one behind is central to achieving the 2030 agenda

LNOB is core to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, making it truthfully universal and transformative:

- **Extreme poverty and inequality have large economic and social costs.** Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon that requires an encompassing approach to LNOB to achieve the SDGs. Inequality is a major brake on the eradication of poverty and sustainable growth. The gap between the incomes of poorest 20% of the world's people and everyone else has widened. Rising poverty and inequality can threaten democracy, social cohesion and inclusion, resilience and stability. They can also exacerbate environmental degradation, climate change and can lead to forced displacement and be a driver of migration. Lower inequality through a focus on those left

behind also ensures that the impact of economic growth on reducing poverty and deprivation will be larger (World Bank, 1998^[6]) (Klasen, 2008^[7]).

- **The rate of improvement in group-based discrimination, human rights and inclusion is declining** (OECD, 2018^[2]). Right-based approaches¹ to development have emphasized economic and social rights including rights to education, health, a decent standard of living, among others. Those left behind are denied those rights. Advocacy on LNOB has therefore become a strong focus of many national and international civil society initiatives². Combating social exclusion is expected to promote social and political stability and cohesion, which in turn can positively affect the overall speed of development (Klasen and Fleurbaey, 2018^[8]).
- **People are at the centre of the 2030 Agenda and the LNOB pledge.** Women and girls, persons with disabilities, pastoral and nomadic people, prisoners, people on the move, members of indigenous groups or ethnic minorities, and sex workers are examples of groups that often tend to be left behind, suffer from discrimination and face stigma. The example groups above are not small: women and girls make up about half of the world's population, approximately 15 per cent of people worldwide have disabilities, and an estimated 86.5 million people were on the move as of 2020 (UNICEF, 2021^[9]).
- **Countries, population groups within countries and individuals are not equally affected by the successive global crises in recent years.** Following the COVID-19 pandemic, inequality has risen on the global political agenda. The effects of climate change are uneven and unevenly felt, with specific geographies and parts of the population disproportionately hit. As climate change worsens, more people might be trapped into poverty if no urgent measures are taken and LNOB is not mainstreamed into development co-operation. By 2030 more than 80% of the world's poorest will live in fragile contexts, including under the threat of conflict situations, forced displacement, pandemics, violent extremism, famine and natural disasters (OECD, 2022^[3]). Development co-operation remains critical for countries most in need³ or vulnerable, especially for the LDCs, many SIDS and in fragile and conflict affected contexts.
- **Progress on many SDGs will only happen, or accelerate, if the most deprived show the biggest improvements.** Multiple and intersecting deprivations and inequalities lead to persistent exclusion - these are the people who are left behind while societies as a whole get better off. This is, by definition, true for goals such as the poverty or hunger targets where only progress among the poor and hungry matters. Progress on these SDGs will largely depend on access to sustainable financial resources, which tend to remain very unequally distributed⁴.

¹ Conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress and often result in groups of people being left behind.

² For example, The Leave No One Behind Partnership was launched in late 2017 by 12 international civil society organisations (ICSOs). In 2018, the partnership set up national coalitions in five pilot countries: Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Nepal, and Vietnam. The national coalitions brought together national CSOs, civic networks and platforms, as well as community-based and community-led organisations.

³ Countries whose populations are left furthest behind are diverse and non-homogenous. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) conception of "countries most in need" is diverse and far from homogeneous. Of the 100 countries included, more than two-thirds are middle income, and many overlap across sub-groupings.

⁴ About 97% of the estimated USD 1.7 trillion in total sustainable investment funds are held in High-Income Countries (UNCTAD, 2021^[23]). Access to climate or green funds by SIDS and LDCs remained at 2% and 17%, respectively, between 2016 and 2020 (OECD, 2022^[24]).

The Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation and LNOB

As the custodian of the development effectiveness principles since the Busan Agreement in 2011 the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) has taken a key interest in the extent to which development partners are succeeding in integrating the LNOB principle into their development policies, practices and related dialogue processes:

- In the **Nairobi Outcome Document** (NOD) of the 2nd High-Level Meeting of the GPEDC (Nairobi, 2016), development actors reaffirmed the 2030 Agenda's pledge to LNOB and recognised that "*development co-operation must leave no-one behind to be effective*". Development actors also identified LNOB as their "greatest challenge" and committed to "*energise the implementation of all previous commitments with a pledge to LNOB*". The NOD also emphasised that more and better data is required to generate knowledge about who is being left behind. Stakeholders also recognised the need to continue to support gender equality and women's empowerment, as critical to effective development co-operation, as well as the importance of focusing on children and youth to achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for present and future generations.
- The GPEDC's **Kampala Principles** (2019) support strengthening the private sector's results on income poverty, decent employment, inequality and economic inclusion.
- The **Geneva Summit Declaration** of the 2022 Effective Development Co-operation Summit reaffirmed the NOD's commitment and the 2030 Agenda's pledge to leave no one behind. It recognised that development co-operation must leave no one behind to be effective. Members declared they will "*focus the attention and efforts of our co-operation on leaving no one behind, including through strengthening gender-responsive approaches to development that respect human rights. We will build a better evidence base, taking into account the vulnerabilities of systems and drivers of poverty, fragility and inequality in our strategies and programmes, and give specific attention to delivering progress on the SDGs for all.*"

The GPEDC monitoring exercise is the backbone of the GPEDC and is a practical tool for DAC members to strengthen the LNOB dimension of their development programming in partner countries. It will generate evidence about efforts of both partner countries and development partners to meet the pledge to LNOB and look at efforts to establish core LNOB building blocks:

- Systems of consultation and engagement with marginalised and vulnerable groups;
- LNOB-responsive priority setting in national plans and strategies; and
- Statistical systems with disaggregated data available for tracking results.

This will inform frank and evidence-based policy dialogue at the country level on all stakeholders' efforts and priorities to meet the pledge to LNOB⁵ and support development partners to consider various dimensions of inequality and support for marginalised groups in their dialogue and programming with partner countries. This process also contributes to strengthened trust across different actors, critical to address some of the sensitive political issues that may limit more rapid progress on LNOB in partner countries. To realise the full potential of the monitoring exercise to spur concrete action and progress at country-level DAC members have the collective responsibility to engage in the GPEDC monitoring exercise and support their partners to do so.

⁵ Given the vastness of the topic and the various facets of LNOB, the approach adopted in the revised monitoring framework is to focus – at country level - on several LNOB aspects relevant for the effectiveness agenda, linked to effectiveness principles/commitments, limited to where GPEDC has comparative advantage and assessed across a range of existing measurements.

DAC tools to support more effective development co-operation

This secretariat note explores the challenges and practices across the DAC to meet their ambition to LNOB. It combines the analysis from the 2018 edition of the OECD Development Co-operation Report on LNOB with the outcomes of the technical contributions and strategic deliberations from DAC members in the “*DAC informal reference group on development effectiveness*” and subsequently the “*effectiveness sounding board*” meetings that have taken place since the GPEDC Senior Level Meeting in 2019 in New York.

The paper provides some initial indications on how DAC members make best use of the four Busan Principles for Effective Development Co-operation (*the effectiveness principles*) to transform LNOB from a pledge into more effective development interventions and partnerships in partner countries. Through a member-driven, collaborative effort the DCD effectiveness team is developing operational guidance and complementary user-friendly training materials, including TIPS *in practices*. In addition, the DCD effectiveness team is developing TIPS⁶ Fundamentals that unpack the effectiveness principles in view of members’ current approaches to apply them across different country settings. This comprehensive set of new DAC tools will support peer learning for more effective engagement at the country level and inform future peer reviews.

⁶ Development Co-operation [TIPS](#) · Tools Insights Practices is a searchable peer learning platform that offers insights into making policies, systems and partnerships more effective.

2 Binding constraints, tensions and operational challenges

DAC peer reviews find that DAC members' general policy commitments to LNOB can be mainstreamed more systematically into development programming. Strong policy statements and political commitment on poverty reduction, LNOB, combatting inequality, inclusion of refugees and internally displaced persons, etc. across DAC members' development co-operation policies are not matched with clear plans on how to operationalise their policies. Trends in DAC member ODA allocations and programming suggest further action is required to be 'fit for purpose' (Di Francesco and Mc Donnel, 2018^[10]). DAC members face many political tensions and operational challenges to live up to their LNOB ambitions. These constraints play out to different degrees across DAC members' operating environments and diverse partner countries. Altogether, they undermine the key underlying pillars of a systematic LNOB approach:

- Understanding who is left behind and why?;
- Involving and empowering the left behind?;
- Monitoring progress on results that leave none behind; and
- Ensuring accountability to those most in need.

Political tensions

People are left behind for different reasons, but some people are left behind because of government action. The 2030 Agenda has placed greater focus on inclusive and people-driven development and accountability vis-à-vis domestic actors, including populations living in those countries. Yet, not all partner country governments have embraced more inclusive development approaches. Some governments may deliberately "push behind" or discriminate against certain parts of their populations because of their identity. Many groups who are left behind may not be a priority for government action or are invisible in the data. For example migrants and refugees are often left out of the data or national planning (Carr-Hill, 2013^[11]). As a result, DAC members have shifted some of their support in the country to civil society organisations (CSOs), multilaterals or local authorities⁷. This decline of direct support to national authorities and the ensuing declining use of country systems challenges bilateral government-to-government relationships at the heart of whole-of-society relations and efforts and reduces the incentives to engage in frank dialogue on how to leave no one behind.

- **Autocratic regimes:** An increasing share of the global population lives under autocratic regimes or in countries with decreased civic space, which poses challenges for how DAC members deal

⁷ The share of ODA provided by DAC countries channelled through public sector institutions diminished from 52% to 48% of total ODA between 2011 and 2019. In 2019, DAC countries channelled 19% of ODA through multilateral organisations, 15% through civil society and 7% through private sector actors.

with those countries' governments⁸, as national priorities may not be transparent or aligned with the SDGs (OECD, 2022^[12]). The concentration of poverty and deprivation in countries that have major governance challenges and related level of fragility, are actively hostile to parts of their population or lacking respect for human rights creates a direct contradiction with the priority to allocate ODA to the people in the greatest need. Vice-versa, development partners also lack enthusiasm to have a strategic dialogue with partner countries when their development and political objectives do not align. This creates challenges for alignment with country results frameworks and DAC members may be collaborating with other partners who may be sometimes closer to affected communities. Alignment with such local or CSO results systems may be difficult because civic space for organisations that represent excluded groups may be very limited or may also reflect the societal rifts that fracture societies.

- **Fragile and/or conflict-affected settings:** In fragile contexts there may be a lack of capacity in the public sector to define inclusive results frameworks. Whilst fragility should be seen as broader than simply traditional state fragility, the role and nature of the state remains central to conflict and fragility dynamics. DAC members can be challenged to grapple with conflicts between the results that partner country governments wish to see prioritised; the results that can be perceived as priorities for the people (expressed by civil society groups, elected representatives, for example), and the results that the DAC member itself wishes to prioritise.
- **Partnering with civil society:** Effective civil society partnerships can make a significant contribution to the SDGs and efforts to LNOB, but DAC members' strategies, funding and dialogue with all types of CSOs can be improved. This relates to all effectiveness principles, with emphasis on the complexities of accountability across the full spectrum of different CSO partnerships, the role DAC members can play in addressing shrinking civic space in partner countries and funding to local CSOs. Using and aligning with results frameworks from civil society organisations at national and/or local level may also be difficult in contexts where civic space for organisations that represent excluded groups is under pressure.
- **Inclusion of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs):** Displaced populations will remain siloed in humanitarian and emergency responses until policy and development planning is aligned with political commitments to inclusion. Despite political commitments to the contrary, many development policy planners still allocate resources as if displaced people are not part of the social and economic fabric even though these men, women and children count in the hundreds of thousands or millions and can represent as high as a quarter the size of host country populations.
- **Pressure to use ODA catalytically:** While using ODA catalytically to crowd-in private sector resources may be in line with the content of the SDGs, it remains unclear whether that process serves the principle of "leaving no one behind" (Alonso, 2018^[13]). A stronger emphasis on mobilizing private resources and concessional loans might come at the expense of the countries and social sectors or segments of society most in need, as these may not offer many prospects of short-term commercial returns.

Operational challenges

Achieving LNOB can be very costly and administratively difficult. Delivering public services like health of education is likely to carry a higher unit cost for the furthest behind than for others – appearing to be a less efficient use of resources. A concern for those left behind defies a logic of efficiency and value-for-

⁸ Situations where the government or de facto authorities are not recognised by DAC members or the "international community" pose specific challenges. In those contexts, humanitarian assistance is used as a one of the main vehicles, because humanitarian assistance purposely circumvent government channels. The implications are that the focus on effectiveness is lost, as an effective humanitarian assistance is not the same thing as an effective development cooperation.

money as in focusing on the low-hanging fruits. Also, reaching the most vulnerable populations carries a lower probability of achieving quick results. Supporting the most fragile contexts and reaching the furthest behind first implies accepting a certain level of risk emanating from adding another layer of complexity and uncertainty to development programming.

- **Dealing with complexity:** Identifying those left furthest behind require detailed country-specific analysis and policy responses. It is challenging to mobilise resources to identify the multidimensional determinants of social, economic and political exclusion and produce relevant data on targeted LNOB groups to enable monitoring progress. Staff in development partner country offices is not always capacitated to conduct such country-specific context analysis.
- **Defining and targeting who is being left behind:** Those left behind often lack a voice; they may be under-represented in political processes; less able to articulate their needs and interests; and discriminated against as religious, ethnic, sexual or other minorities (OECD, 2018^[5]).
- **Pressure for short-term results:** There are tensions between achieving sustainable results and pressure to achieve tangible results in the shorter-term and reach target groups quickly. For example, LNOB priorities (such as gender or LGBTQIA+ rights) tend to take longer to deliver on than the shorter-term project outputs more explicitly built into national development plans or donor strategies. Many donors emphasise performance information to demonstrate how well they conduct development co-operation, rather than focusing on achieving development results (Zwart, 2017^[14]). They tend to use top-down and predictive approaches along with time-bound results metrics. Research, however, shows that these often prevent front-line workers from using skills, local knowledge and creativity to solve problems (Honig, 2020^[15]). Time-bound metrics may also be inappropriate for activities supporting the attitudinal and political changes that are required to eradicate poverty, as these changes require time (Kharas and Gertz, 2018^[16]).
- **Data collection:** Challenges to develop and use qualitative disaggregated data that do not exclude or under-count at-risk groups. Targeting populations for development programmes can also put some groups, such as religious minorities, ethnic groups or LGBTQIA+ people, in danger or at least raise tensions. For example, surveys tend to under-represent people in urban slums (because of difficulties in identifying and interviewing), dangerous places and fragile or transient households and within households (Carr-Hill, 2013^[11]). Undocumented migrants are habitually left out of the data. Political sensitivities - In some contexts central statistics agency or national statistics office are not always fully independent and/or well resourced - complicate data collection and availability, exacerbating already limited statistical capacities (OECD, 2017^[17]).

3 “Effectiveness pathways” to deliver on DAC commitments

‘Effectiveness pathways’ set out ‘what good looks like’ for each effectiveness principle in climate action in developing countries. They provide a medium-term direction of travel and reinforce members’ longer-term thinking across development planning, programming and budgeting cycles towards achieving more sustainable development results. They support addressing the inherent LNOB trade-offs between calls for working through national systems to support long-term, transformational change (e.g., changing perceptions on gender roles) with more immediate pressures to reach target groups quickly within the constraints of a three- or four-year programme. By encouraging realism and continuity towards achieving DAC member LNOB priorities they enable DAC members developing a coherent, strong narrative on how their development co-operation supports long-term benefits of leaving no one behind – and addresses the risks of leaving some behind.

Effectiveness pathways also provide clearer incentives and accountability mechanism to operationalise LNOB across the four effectiveness principles, making it easier to monitor than a principle. By identifying a baseline to assess progress over time they can inform DAC peer reviews and drive mutual learning and dialogue around DAC members’ progress on their LNOB pledge. They are therefore mainly targeted at programme officers and policymakers in DAC member government entities, from the central level down through to local administrative units, including development practitioners with sectoral specialisation in country offices in partner countries and Heads of Co-operation at DAC members’ embassies.

The DAC does not operate in isolation but collaborates with a diverse range of implementing partners to achieve its intended development results. For the DAC’s effectiveness pathways to transpire to the country level and trigger concrete behaviour changes across all development actors, therefore requires engaging all development stakeholders in the policy discussions on national LNOB priorities.

Country Ownership

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Partner countries - and development partners in their respective development strategies and programmes - are identifying, addressing the needs of, and tracking progress on development targets for women and girls, youth and children – as emphasised in the [GPEDC Nairobi Outcome Document](#) - and vulnerable and marginalised.

Development partners’ interventions align with and influence inclusive, catalytic and accountable country owned strategies and results frameworks, using countries’ own statistics to track progress in achieving the intended results.

Development programmes need to incorporate strategies for tackling even the most difficult and sensitive bottlenecks and managing trade-offs for the poorest and most vulnerable people, cognisant of partner country sensitivities and context. In practice, identifying, addressing the needs of, and tracking progress on development targets for women and girls, youth and children requires acknowledging the complex nature of our operating environment, including in power and politics. The reality of political situations sometimes requires pragmatic choices, such as targeting less politically sensitive vulnerabilities (e.g. disability) or sectors (e.g. water and sanitation) in order to build trust and open intervention pathways to address more sensitive areas (OECD, 2018^[5]). Subsequently, DAC members have adopted several tools and approaches to inform more effective LNOB strategies across their development programming.

Develop and use specific guidance, methodologies and diagnostic tools to support country offices identify who is left behind, where and why. When national data is inadequate, diagnostic tools can be based on international indicators and criteria to identify where needs are greatest.

- **Germany's Agency for International Development Co-operation's (GIZ) [poverty analysis tool](#):** The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has a poverty marker that is applied to all financial and technical cooperation projects in the appraisal phase. It is also developing a « quality criterion » on poverty and inequality, which is intended further to raise the profile of poverty and inequality from the start of the programme cycle.
- **The development agency of the Belgian federal government (Enabel) has developed an [Ex ante Equity Impact Assessment Tool](#).** Enabel's Gender Budget Scan assesses the degree in which projects and programmes integrate gender equality considerations. It works on broadly similar principles to the DAC gender equality marker, but with greater granularity (OECD, 2016^[18]).
- **The French Development Agency (AFD) has a dedicated research facility on inequalities and has supported a range of relevant research projects.** These include country-level inequality diagnostics, the application of Oxfam's Multidimensional Inequality Framework and assessments of the impact of fiscal decisions on inequality in different countries ('fiscal incidence assessments'). AFD operates a '[sustainable development appraisal](#)' process, whereby proposed new projects are allocated scores between -2 and +3 across six domains, of which two relate explicitly to poverty and inequalities.
- **The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) employs a multidimensional poverty analysis (MDPA) to identify who is living in poverty, how poverty is experienced and why people are stuck in poverty.** A set of guiding tools underpin the MDPA and are available on Sida's [interactive Poverty Toolbox](#).
- **Swiss Development Co-operation (SDC) has produced [guidance on LNOB](#),** which includes a detailed definition explaining links to multi-dimensional poverty and to horizontal inequality. The SDC anchors LNOB in all its strategies and programmes (analysis, priority setting, allocation of resources, and theory of change and programme design).
- **Ireland is developing a new toolkit on putting the 'furthest behind' first.** The Department of Foreign Affairs has one dedicated specialist on its [policy on 'the furthest behind first'](#) and poverty reduction.
- **The Australian Government is funding the further development of the [Individual Deprivation Measure \(IDM\)](#) through a partnership between the Australian National University and the International Women's Development Agency.** The Measure assesses 15 dimensions of poverty at the individual level, enabling disaggregation by sex, age, disability and geography. It also enables an analysis of intersections to reveal overlapping disadvantages (OECD, 2018^[5]).

Developing policy expertise. Centralising dedicated expertise in headquarters to support country office can address capacity constraints and knowledge gaps in country offices.

- In **Germany** there are specialists on poverty and inequalities in both BMZ and GIZ. GIZ has developed a [dedicated website on poverty, inequality and 'leaving no-one behind'](#), which was developed as part of a project to advise BMZ on these issues.
- **Ireland's** Department of Foreign Affairs has one dedicated specialist on its policy on 'the furthest behind first' and poverty reduction.
- **New Zealand's** Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has a team of three specialists working on issues related to human rights and to horizontal inequalities.
- The **SDC** has a policy advisor on LNOB and a policy advisor on human rights.
- **Sida's** centre for expertise on multi-dimensional poverty is located within Sida's Chief Economist's Team. Consisting of four staff it oversees the application of multi-dimensional poverty analysis across Sida.

Learning from peers. Peer learning across DAC members' own country offices can also be a powerful driver to diffuse knowledge and approaches.

- **Sida** works through "networks" of staff with a particular interest and focus on different dimensions of reducing poverty and inequalities: the sustainable development analyst network is highly engaged in multi-dimensional poverty analysis; there is also a network on democracy and human rights; and a network on gender.
- The **OECD "Community of Practice on Poverty and Inequalities"** provides a space for peer exchange and learning among DAC poverty and inequality experts on how development co-operation can best analyse, be data driven, and accelerate progress towards tackling the intersecting drivers and impacts of poverty and economic and social inequalities.
- [Peer reviews of DAC Members](#) track progress and hold DAC members to account against international development co-operation standards, recommendations and benchmarks, including on how effectively DAC Member countries integrate LNOB into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation for increased accountability in their development co-operation policies.

Invest in research and analysis on poverty and inequality to inform development programming.

- **Germany** supports research on poverty and inequalities in the context of development cooperation, including through the German Institute for Development and Sustainability.
- The **United Kingdom** established a 'research for development' database that includes research on poverty and inequality.
- **Spain** has funded research on poverty and inequalities. An example is a recent research project in Central America, which examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on inequalities and social cohesion.
- **Switzerland** also funds research through a range of channels, one being the joint [Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development](#).

Dedicated strategies to tackle LNOB. Specific strategies and policies for reducing inequalities and ending discrimination are needed to mainstream an LNOB approach during strategic planning and country programming.

- **Canada's** [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#) aims to contribute to global efforts to **eradicate poverty** and inequality around the world. It defines an approach based on human rights, one that considers all forms of discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, place of birth, colour, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability or migrant or refugee status. Many other DAC members have a specific gender strategy.
- **Norway** does not have an overarching strategy on reducing poverty and inequalities, but it has a [strategy on tackling disability-based inequalities](#), and one [on gender equality](#).

Enable co-ordinated and partner-led approaches. Isolated initiatives are unlikely to have significant impact. Joint and coordinated donor approaches, in collaboration with right holders, can rally resources, actions and message towards addressing root causes of poverty and inequality or target specific groups that are left behind.

- The **German** and **Australian** governments, through Germany's Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), have supported the Cambodian Ministry of Planning to create and implement an overarching poverty identification mechanism. This mechanism, called "[Identification of Poor Households](#)" or "[IDPoor](#)", serves as a single basis for all support programmes targeting the poor. IDPoor was designed collaboratively by the Cambodian government and key stakeholders, who focused on three important aspects: the participatory nature of the selection process, capacity development, and sustainability.

Using a development approach to invest in displaced populations is a sound resource allocation decision.

- Investing in public services and infrastructure for displaced people directly benefits host communities and their governments (World Bank, 2017_[19]). It mitigates social and economic costs accruing from sudden arrivals of displaced populations. It also enables displaced people to integrate and become economically productive thus contributing to increasing domestic resources through tax revenue. Inclusion means development partners can finance better value for money host country services. This is a compelling alternative to more costly and less sustainable, parallel services provided by humanitarian actors. Using host country systems enable donors to flag the authority and comparative advantage host country governments have over humanitarian actors in planning and programming.

Focus on Results

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Development actors agree on their shared understanding of the concept of LNOB and how implementation success and LNOB are defined and measured in partner countries. Development partners adopt LNOB as an encompassing approach to assess how overall development strategies reach those at risk of being left behind (and what can be done to improve such strategies) rather than being an agenda for a multitude of finely targeted (and fragmented) programs to separately address each form of disadvantage.

Country results frameworks and mechanisms in the partner country are transparent, participatory and multi-stakeholder. Relevant targets and results indicators are adequately disaggregated by income status, sex, geography, age, disability, citizenship status and ethnicity (when relevant and doing no harm). Targets and indicators allow to measure who is in the frontline of multiple vulnerabilities.

Clarity around results promotes a stronger, shared understanding of the LNOB agenda. This is required to offer tailored guidance and building capacity to measure and monitor results that are sensitive to vulnerability and exclusion. To be able to measure LNOB results after a project or programme intervention requires integrating LNOB results indicators already at planning and investment stages of development programmes. Clarity around results requires defining:

- i) *what LNOB results should be achieved?*
- ii) *how they will be measured?*
- iii) *where to source the data?*

What LNOB results?

The long-term well-being of those left-behind must be considered a priority. This requires considering approaches that improve the mobility and integration of those most behind with more dynamic parts of the economy rather than targeted support to alleviate their present situation.

Joint context analysis with partner countries and local actors. Working with local actors to understand local context and political economy can inform priorities about what LNOB results should be achieved. Analysis can focus on the status of the SDGs and LNOB in national planning and performance frameworks; developing a mutual understanding of who is left behind within a country and why; and assess comparative advantages of implementing partners for optimal division of labour.

- The UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) has piloted a LNOB approach in four "trailblazer" countries – Bangladesh, Nepal, Rwanda and Zimbabwe – through the introduction of specific action plans and monitoring and evaluation systems. In these countries, FCDO prioritises LNOB both through targeted programmes – on disability and women's empowerment in Rwanda and Zimbabwe – and mainstreaming, with all programmes screened against a LNOB lens and all development partners encouraged to apply this lens. FCDO has raised local staff's awareness on LNOB through specific training. Early lessons are that high-level commitment, strong leadership, evidence-based and pragmatic prioritisation, and the incorporation of equity considerations into value-for-money assessments are vital for successful LNOB approaches (OECD, 2018^[5]).

SDG results frameworks. Strengthen and align with existing national and local SDG implementation and data collection processes. The SDGs provide agreed and common anchors for dialogue on aligning with national development priorities under the SDGs.

- **Canada's** results framework contains one indicator on income poverty, and another on income inequality (both derived from the Sustainable Development Goals' indicator framework). It also includes numerous indicators that explicitly refer to gender equality.
- The **EU's** 'Global Europe Results Framework' contains, in its top tier of indicators, one indicator on the reduction of inequalities, gender equality and women's empowerment, and one indicator on disability inclusion. The project appraisal phase considers proposed projects' scores against the OECD DAC gender equality and disability inclusion markers. Sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive indicators and statistics are required in all monitoring and evaluation of EU development cooperation. DG-INTPA has developed an [inequality marker](#) (the « I-marker ») to be used as part of the appraisal process.

LNOB in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. People left behind are likely to be vulnerable to shocks and crises and likely to live in places that are fragile, conflict affected and disaster prone. Common indicators and goals on resilience and LNOB may provide a bridge for results frameworks that support working across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. A triple nexus approach that contributes to more effective interventions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts should aim to incorporate a priority focus on those most at risk or left behind, with support for equal fulfilment of basic needs for all and gender equality (OECD, 2022^[20]).

How to measure LNOB results?

Capturing LNOB outcomes requires rebalancing qualitative and quantitative measurement to deliver a richer picture of economic, social and political progress. Deeper collaboration with evaluation systems and techniques such as stories of change and qualitative mapping are amongst mechanisms that can complement quantitative data. It can incentivise work with partners to identify the conditions and investments that are needed to include everyone in progress such as civil registration and legal identity or social protection.

- **Account for partner country realities.** Balance internal managing practices for sustainable development results appropriately with partner country realities and needs. Prioritise the commitment to align with country-level priorities in inclusive country-led results framework by investing in dialogue to jointly identify those priority results. Keep results management systems simple as well as manageable and reliable to enable dialogue, capacity building, and increased harmonisation.
- **Conduct distributional analysis.** Look at outcomes for different parts of the population as part of results frameworks. Commonly, this would be based on income - measuring whether the poorest parts of the population have benefitted and whether that benefit is a) faster than average and b) fast enough to narrow the gap with the rest of the population. Narrowing the gap is the test for progress on leaving no one behind. This can inform development cooperation providers' distribution of resources more in line with needs of groups and regions across the country (Desai and Greenhill, 2017^[21]).
- **Collect and publish evidence on participation of left behind development stakeholders.** This needs to be built into the results framework at design stage and monitored throughout. This enables showing the extent to which different groups of people have taken part in different programmes. These milestones can all be monitored and used to show steps along the way until results can be delivered that show what share of benefits have been received by different parts of the population and whether the gap is narrowing between those left behind and everyone else.

Where to source the data?

Delivering on the commitment to mainstreaming LNOB involves building national capabilities for data disaggregation. This involves re-thinking the skills and capacities that partner country statistical systems need to collect quantitative and qualitative data; engage with diverse partners; manage trade-offs in cost, coverage and data privacy; meet quality standards; and constantly update and fine-tune tools and metrics (OECD, 2018^[5]).

Invest in and use quality disaggregated data and standards. People in chronic poverty are deprived across multiple dimensions and these deprivations are reinforced by identity-based discrimination and neglect. Disaggregation based on income status, sex, geography, age and disability are fundamental. Many SDG indicators also specify disaggregation relevant to people left behind such as citizenship status or ethnicity. Improving the availability of disaggregated data requires attention to the administrative data, household surveys and national censuses that are the bedrock of SDG monitoring.

- The **UN World Data Forum** has energised and shared developments across use of big data, satellite data and citizen data which adds real value to official sources, especially for understanding marginalised and minority populations. The data revolution on access and interoperability drives further progress in the availability of adequate data for monitoring LNOB. NSOs have been collecting and publishing disaggregated data and curating data from non-official sources, including citizen data giving access to more granular information often in real-time.
- The **OECD Inclusive Growth Initiative** has developed a Framework for Action on Inclusive Growth to guide policy action that “brings everyone along” (and thus LNOB) and aims to reduce multi-dimensional inequalities and empower people to live happy, healthy and productive lives. The Framework provides countries with broad guidance on how to design and implement integrated policy packages to promote inclusive growth. The OECD has also developed a dashboard of 24 inclusive growth indicators to monitor progress over time (OECD, 2018^[22]).

Inclusive Partnerships

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Stakeholders furthest behind are empowered through enabling voice and meaningful participation in setting and reviewing results for LNOB across development interventions. The people that are being left behind are full, equal agents of their country's sustainable development,

Development partners consult a broad range of stakeholders and representatives of vulnerable and marginalised societal groups in preparing their country-level strategies. Engaging a diversity of actors can help bring in the perspectives of the vulnerable and marginalised to ensure that their interests and needs are represented in development policies and strategies.

Development partners strengthen the capacity of vulnerable and marginalised groups to organise and represent themselves, including by ensuring their meaningful participation in decision making and establishing safe and inclusive mechanisms for their civic engagement¹:

- Capable national and local civil society actors have secured spaces for people's participation in political and public life.
- Capable national and local authorities that are inclusive, responsive and accountable to their populations, with a special focus on the furthest behind people and places.
- All segments of society, including women, youth and minority groups, participate politically in parliamentary and electoral processes as candidates and voters.
- National human rights institutions and community networks hold decision makers accountable on the state obligations and recommendations from human rights treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review.

Locally led development. Invest in enabling environments and participatory approaches for agents of change, including civil society, local governments, women's organisations and local businesses, who give voice to and empower excluded and vulnerable people (OECD, 2018^[5]).

- **Enabel's** approach of « proximity » to local communities is conducive to greater engagement with local rights holders.
- **Ireland's** approach places a particular emphasis on supporting rights holders, through civil society organisations, to hold their governments to account for their strategies on poverty and inequalities, with a focus on low-income countries and SIDS.
- **AFD's** Strategic Plan commits to a cross-cutting objective that 100% of the agency's activities should reinforce – or at least not weaken – « social links » between peoples and countries. The « 100% social link » strategy says that it aims for projects to be co-created through participatory governance structures. AFD seeks to include project 'beneficiaries', local communities and youth as part of this co-creation approach. To mainstream its "100% social link" approach, AFD is building upon its own experience. All AFD projects are already subject to a sustainable development assessment which embraces six dimensions, namely "sustainable growth and resilient economy", "gender equality", "sustainability of project impacts and governance frameworks", "conservation of biodiversity, management of environments and natural resources", "social well-being and reduction of imbalances" and "fight against climate change and its impacts" (OECD, 2018^[22]).
- The **U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)** has a clear commitment to engaging people from experiencing poverty and inequalities as co-implementers: USAID's policy documents contain commitments to the active participation of women, young people, LGBT people and especially indigenous peoples.

- **Australia's** strategies and guidance includes the principle that women, people with disabilities and indigenous people should be actively engaged in Australian development cooperation. For this, Australia has developed a self-assessment tool for its development cooperation spending called the 'aid quality check'. The aid quality check includes a dedicated question on the active participation of people with disabilities, and of indigenous peoples. Australia's DFAT recognises that mainstream policies and programmes are unlikely to benefit indigenous peoples unless they undertake due diligence to be inclusive. DFAT has developed a range of policies and operational guidance to ensure the department is inclusive of indigenous peoples in its foreign policy, trade policy and development policy (OECD, 2018_[22]).

Private sector engagement that maximises sustainable development results. Ensure that a private sector solution is the most appropriate way to reach those furthest behind. Prior analysis, based on a clear problem definition, a simple theory of change, and consultations with local actors and governmental partners, are critically important to identify where a private sector solution is more appropriate than a partnership with other actors or direct investment by the development partner to achieve the desired development outcomes. Clearly communicating the added value of business or private sector solutions is also vital to build trust and ensure transparency and accountability. Targeting the furthest behind through private sector engagement (PSE) requires greater risk-taking on the part of all partners involved.

- The **GPEDC's** [Kampala Principles toolkit](#) provides tailored advice to countries and organisations engaging in private sector partnerships in development co-operation. It includes practical guidance on how to design, implement and review policies and partnerships to address global challenges and deliver on the 2030 Agenda through private sector engagement that leaves no one behind.

Flexibility and risk appetite. Portfolio-wide approaches can enable development partners to re-calibrate risks, results, innovation and evaluation to focus on LNOB. Risk assessment and management strategies that are concerned with reputational and fiduciary risks rather than long-term development results need such alignment. So, too, are requirements that pressure programmes to disburse funds and seek value for money, which can skew investment towards easier wins and faster results – and away from the harshest contexts and toughest development challenges (OECD, 2018_[5]).

Transparency and Accountability

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

Capable national statistical institutions gather, analyse and use disaggregated data and evidence, including to understand the range of disadvantages and deprivations that leave people behind. Development partners use data and information systems (aligned with those from the country when available) to design strategies and identify the vulnerable and marginalised.

Disaggregated data and statistics are available to identify those vulnerable and marginalised (or populations at risk of being left behind) as well as to monitor progress on specific targets and results identified for those populations. Other development actors are being involved in accountability assessments of their development co-operation. Vulnerability and risk assessments are publicly available.

All levels of government, marginalized communities, stakeholders and development partners contribute to fill gaps in disaggregated data with improved surveys and registries, new techniques and technologies, perception surveys, practitioner know-how, participatory mechanisms etc.

Reporting on LNOB spending and results. Invest in 'quick wins' to increase the evidence base on left-behind groups. Particularly through making administrative data transparent, through clear and accessible

portals, and through citizen-generated initiatives that collect community-level data and strengthen the accountability of local governments, communities can hold policy-makers accountable for their decisions and actions.

- Many **DAC members** use both the OECD DAC gender equality and disability inclusion markers for reporting on some of its spending, even if not systematically.
- **New Zealand's** Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has three markers that can be used to track whether planned programmes integrate some considerations relating to (primarily) horizontal inequalities: a human rights marker, a gender marker, and a child and youth well-being marker. Aotearoa New Zealand uses the OECD DAC gender equality and disability inclusion markers⁹ for reporting on some of its spending.
- **Iceland** applies gender mainstreaming methods in line with the principles of gender-responsive budgeting. This means that gender perspectives are considered at all stages of budgeting, and revenues and expenditures are restructured to promote gender equality.
- **USAID's** 2023 Annual Performance Plan contains two strategic objectives relevant to horizontal inequalities: strategic objective 3.2 is to « advance equity, accessibility, and rights for all »; and strategic objective 3.5 is to « improve inclusive and equitable health, education, and livelihood services, especially for women, youth, and marginalized groups ». USAID also undertook an 'equity assessment' of its work, in 2021.

Monitoring and evaluation. Mainstream an LNOB approach across evaluations and self-assessments. Making the results of evaluations conducted available in a transparent way also improves accountability, through evidence-based quick wins.

- In **Norway** conducts evaluations focused on gender- and disability-based inequalities.
- **Sida** has conducted specific evaluations on poverty reduction across different areas (e.g. poverty impact of Sida's guarantee programme) and in different countries (Tanzania, Vietnam).
- **Switzerland** has evaluated its results-based management system from a poverty reduction perspective.

⁹ Markers can in principle be used both as an ex-ante and as an ex-post reporting tool. They are covered in this section because reporting to the Creditor Reporting System is ex post. But where markers are known also be used for ex ante appraisal, this is noted under the next research question also. (This note applies across all annexes).

4 Annexes

Leaving no one behind across development co-operation effectiveness

The DAC has committed to scaling up its efforts for “countries most in need,” which include least developed countries (LDCs), low-income countries (LICs), small island developing states (SIDS), land-locked developing countries (LLDCs), and fragile and conflict-affected contexts (FCAC). Although the overarching objective of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), as expressed in its mandate, is to contribute to implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the committee does not have a definition for “leaving no one behind”.

Prior to the 2015 pledge to LNOB, DAC members have engaged in a series of development co-operation effectiveness commitments that encapsulate various elements of an LNOB spirit:

Pre-GPEDC			
Monterrey Consensus (2001)	Improve ODA targeting to the poor.		
Paris Declaration (2005)	Increase impact aid has in reducing poverty and inequality; increase independence from aid, always considering the consequences for the poorest people and countries.		
Accra Agenda for Action (2008)	Improve the livelihoods of the most vulnerable people in the world.		
GPEDC-specific		OECD/DAC	
Busan Partnership Agreement (2011)	Focus on results: eradicating poverty and reducing inequality, recognising criticality of gender equality and women’s empowerment.		
Mexico HLM Communiqué (2014)	Secure a sustainable future that leaves no one behind; commit to address the challenges to improve the effectiveness and results of ODA going to the poorest fragile states.	DAC HLM (2014)	Focus on targeting countries most in need for ODA disbursements Commitment to reversing the declining trend of ODA to LDCs
Nairobi Outcome Document (2016)	Reaffirmation of the 2030 Agenda’s pledge to leave no-one behind, recognition of the role of the private sector in LNOB.	DAC HLM (2016)	Address the root causes of conflicts, forced displacement, and refugee flows through effective humanitarian ODA.
		DAC HLM (2017)	Mainstreaming gender equality across all policies and programmes increases the overall effectiveness of ODA.

Kampala Principles (2019)	Private sector engagement emphasises results on income poverty, decent employment, inequality an economic inclusion.		
		DAC HLM (2020)	Mainstreaming gender equality across all policies and programmes increases the overall effectiveness of ODA, donors to strengthen further direct and targeted financing for gender equality.
Geneva Declaration (2022)	Reaffirmation of the 2030 Agenda's pledge to leave no-one behind.		

Summary of pathways, challenges and practices identified in this paper

PRINCIPLES	PATHWAYS		CHALLENGES & CONSTRAINTS	PRACTICES	DAC EXAMPLES
COUNTRY OWNERSHIP	WHO is left behind?	<i>Research & Analysis,</i>	Dealing with complexity (political economy, social dynamics)	- Multidimensional and transparent approaches to policy and programming	
				- Develop and use specific guidance, methodologies and diagnostic tools	Germany, Belgium, France, Sweden, Switzerland, Ireland, Australia
	WHY are they left behind?	<i>Learning</i>	Limited in-country LNOB expertise	- Dedicated policy specialists in headquarters	Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Switzerland, Sweden
				- Peer learning to mainstream LNOB into development programming	Sweden, COP-PI, DAC Peer reviews
	INVOLVE those left behind	<i>Policy Dialogue</i>	LNOB insufficiently integrated in national development priorities	- Enable co-ordinated and partner-led approaches	Australia, Germany
			Development partner policy incoherence (Foreign Policy, Trade Policy, etc.)	- Policy Coherence for sustainable Development through in-donor coordination/consultation	
			Rights based approaches or value driven co-operation conflicts with political sensitivities of partners	- Investing in enabling CSO environment (inclusive dialogue)	
			Active social exclusion & discrimination of population groups in partner countries.	- Invest in Displaced populations	

FOCUS ON RESULTS	TARGET the left behind	Results Frameworks	Short-termism, pressure to reach target groups quickly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work through national systems to support long-term, transformational change - Use Appropriate timeframes for theories of change 	
			Value-for-money versus higher costs to achieve LNOB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joined-up approaches where possible 	
			Country results frameworks inadequate for development partner reporting requirements (insufficient timeliness, granularity, priorities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen and align with existing national and local SDG implementation and data collection processes 	Canada, European Union
INCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIPS	EMPOWER the left behind	Partnerships	Risk aversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Portfolio-wide approaches 	
			Lack of development partner in-country capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Localise development co-operation and invest in enabling CSO environment (strengthened capacities of local stakeholders and institutions) 	Australia, Belgium, France, United States
			No delegated authority in country offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Devolve decision-making power around engaging in partnerships to country offices 	
			High staff turnover at country level, undermines relationships built on trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate HR policies for capacity development in country offices 	
			No incentives to partner with locals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate staff performance evaluations 	
TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	MONITOR progress	Monitor & Evaluation	Inadequate national data (timeliness, disaggregation, trustworthiness, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invest in data systems strengthening 	
			Duplication of monitoring efforts (requirements, processes, inputs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mainstream an LNOB approach across M&E practices 	Norway, Sweden, Switzerland
			Capacity requirements (DP and PC)		
	INCREASE Accountability	Reporting & Communication	Complex accountability across full spectrum of development actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reporting on LNOB spending and results 	Iceland, United States, New Zealand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage in the GPEDC monitoring and country dialogues 				Sweden, Switzerland, European Union, Canada, Korea	

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