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**DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE**

DAC Network on Poverty Reduction

POVNET PROGRAMME OF WORK 2009-10

DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT ON EMPOWERMENT

17-18 March 2011, OECD, Paris

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THE ROLE OF EMPOWERMENT FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT

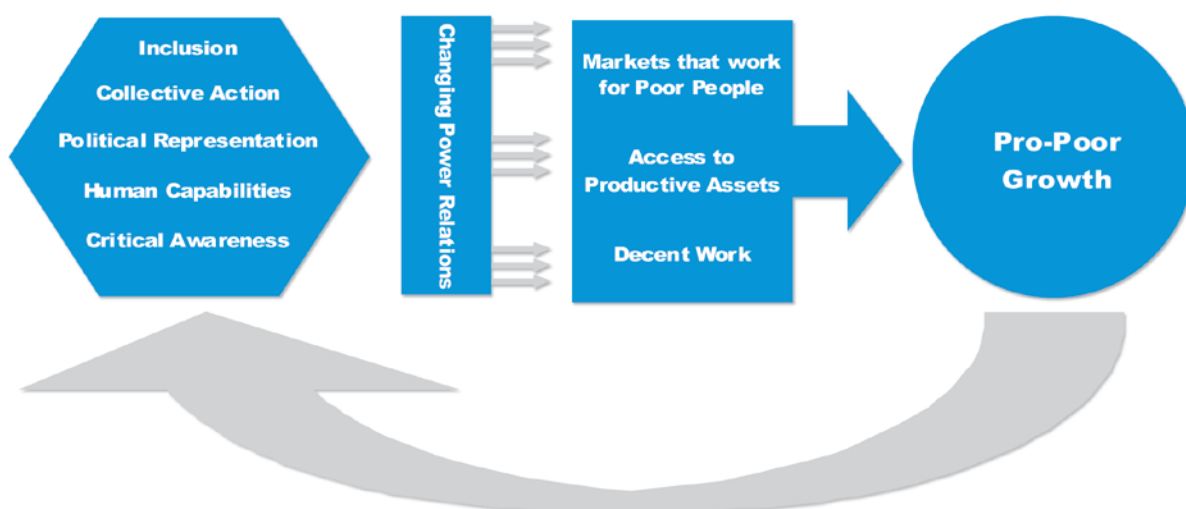
We have long recognised that it is the agency and actions of poor people themselves that will bring about sustainable improvements in their lives and livelihoods. We know that empowerment of those living in poverty is both a critical driver and an important measure of poverty reduction. It is essential for bringing about the policies and investments needed to expand the economic opportunities of the poor, to promote pro-poor growth and address the multiple dimensions of poverty. To release the potential of empowerment donors need understand what it means, how it works and how best to support it.

Empowerment is critical for meeting MDG 1

Poor women and men need to gain and exert influence over the political, economic and social processes that determine and, all too often, constrain their livelihood opportunities. Sustainable poverty reduction needs poor people to be both the agents and beneficiaries of economic growth - to directly participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes. Strengthening poor people's organizations, providing them with more control over assets and promoting poor people influence in economic governance will improve the terms on which they engage in markets. This type of economic empowerment combined with similar advances in political and social empowerment will make economic growth much more effective in reducing poverty.

KEY POLICY MESSAGES

- The empowerment of poor people secures their rights and drives pro-poor growth;
- All aid instruments can be designed to facilitate empowerment and encourage its multi-dimensional effects;
- Empowerment must happen through people's own actions, enabled by a supportive environment which donors can help strengthen;
- Donors need to deal with inequitable power relations that keep poor people in poverty and be aware of their own role in them;
- Empowerment takes time, sustained engagement and the ability to balance short term results and long term impact.



KEY MESSAGES SUPPORTING THE ROLE OF EMPOWERMENT FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

1	Partner country governments and development partners can play an important role in supporting poor people's empowerment. The right investments in economic and social infrastructure, regulatory measures supporting basic rights, including to decent work and to individual and collective assets, improve employment conditions and the fruits of labour. Valuing women's labour in the care economy is critical to their economic empowerment. Social cash transfers can do this while also strengthening poor households' ability to make more beneficial choices investment, consumption, employment or the sale of their produce.
2	All aid instruments, from budget support to micro-level projects, can be designed and implemented in ways that support empowerment. Even where the programme objectives may not seem directly related to empowerment, such as the construction of an irrigation system or rural roads, an intervention can be designed so that poor people's empowerment is supported. Many aid modalities provide opportunities for including poor people's organizations or representatives in policy dialogues, budget processes or choice of technical assistance and contract selection.
3	It is peoples' own actions that empower them. Donors cannot empower, but together with Governments they can play a significant role both in creating an enabling environment for empowerment and also in providing direct support for people's own actions to empower themselves. Empowerment in one sphere leads to empowerment in others. Individual donors do not each have to attempt interventions across all spheres of empowerment - economic, political and social. Modest, but effective, interventions in one can have multiplier effects in others.
4	Empowerment is a process that cannot be externally controlled or managed. Donors cannot engineer empowerment, but, where they understand the inequities in existing power relations, they can facilitate and support empowerment processes and create space for poor people's intervention and influence in them. Donors are powerful actors in their partner countries and need to be careful that the exercise of their influence does not have a disempowering effect.
5	Donors can seek to support empowerment directly, through working with organisations and associations representing poor people, or indirectly through partner governments by supporting the enabling environment and conditions needed for empowerment and pro-poor growth. Building capacities in both these areas takes time - as does changing deeply-embedded power imbalances. Defining and measuring empowerment outcomes are important for balancing their achievement with the desire for other shorter term results.

GOOD DONOR PRACTICE

Take into account existing, and potentially challenging, power relations	Donors need to understand and address inequitable power relations by incorporating 'power analysis' into their work. Not understanding power relations and local contexts can lead to poor design and delivery and make donor efforts disempowering. One way to avoid this is by supporting locally owned empowerment processes that are already underway. In doing so, donors should be careful not to ignite the potential field of tension between citizen and state.
Support capacity development on both sides of the equation	Donors need to steer their support for empowerment while fostering learning and reflection. Participatory methods can be quick and efficient, producing data in a timely fashion for evidence-based analysis and action in ways that support empowerment. For local people, participating in monitoring and evaluation can itself be empowering if they are given space to establish their own analytical framework, determine what changes are valued and are in a position to challenge 'development from above'.
Design programmes to optimise the multiple dimensions of empowerment	The design and delivery of donor support is critical. Donors need to understand how interest groups will react to, and seek to influence, the programmes they support if they are to design interventions which have a realistic prospect of shifting the balance of power in favour of poor people. As empowerment takes time, donors should plan for long term engagements if wanting to have a sustainable impact against quickly producing short term results. Although empowerment is a long process, donor support is finite. Having an exit strategy from the onset is therefore important.
Supporting rights based approaches underpins empowerment	Supporting and promoting the rights of poor people is a useful way for donors to help create the enabling environment for empowerment. For donors this means addressing issues related to enhancement, awareness, enablement and enforcement of the rights that are vital for developing poor people's livelihood opportunities.