



CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness

Independent Accountability Committee 2021 REPORT



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List of acronyms

ADE	CPDE Aid and Development Effectiveness Map
CPDE	CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness
CSO	Civil society organisation
EDC	Effective Development Cooperation
GA	CPDE Global Assembly
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
GS	CPDE Global Secretariat
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IAC	Independent Accountability Committee
IP	Istanbul Principle
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PCSD	Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development
RTTP	Report to the Public
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
TAP	Transparency and Accountability Policy
TTF	Thematic Task Force
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VLR	Voluntary Local Review
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WG	Working Group

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Executive Summary

Following a two year publication gap between 2019 and 2020, the IAC Report is here. Its return happens in a global context which has changed radically from the time of the last edition², as the world continues to grapple with the Covid-19 pandemic while navigating this never before travelled road to recovery. What the pandemic has clearly shown however, and which many would argue is here to stay - including the new IAC bringing this report to you the reader - is that our societies and the way in which they are managed needs transparency and accountability.

The CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness is no stranger to these values and principles. Being born out of the urgent necessity for their streamlining, and anchored in the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness³ which have shaped its vision to this day, indeed puts great responsibility on the Platform to continually have them as guidelines in its diverse interventions and interactions to advance the sustainable development⁴ and effective development cooperation⁵ agendas.

This document, called an Inception Report due to its being revived, looks at how much progress CPDE is making in doing just that, where more of it is needed and how its own transparency and accountability policy⁶ is being used in practice to bridge the gap in CSO development effectiveness and bring about the desired change.

¹ Correct as of April 2021 <https://csopartnership.org/our-accountability/accountability-mechanisms/>

² <https://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IAC-Report-2018-EN.pdf>

³ <https://concordeurope.org/2012/09/21/istanbul-principles/>

⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

⁵ <https://www.effectivecooperation.org/>

⁶ <https://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Transparency-and-Accountability-EN.pdf>

I. Introduction

At its October 2020 Policy Conference, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the key message from the CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness centred on all actors working together toward the road to recovery in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While much effort has been seen to this end, across regions and sectors it also became clear the sought recovery was being compromised as effective development cooperation principles were being by-passed - chief among which stakeholder transparency and accountability⁷- leaving millions of people behind, and derailing to a considerable extent progress on development effectiveness.

One year on and with countries still counting the cost of this unprecedented health crisis, the CPDE message has been made even more relevant by fears the pandemic could lead to over one billion people living in extreme poverty⁸, similar to poverty levels witnessed when CPDE was launched in 2012. As nations looked for global solutions in the COP26 climate conference,⁹ having gathered just weeks earlier for the first world summit on food systems,¹⁰ the wide spectrum of old and new development challenges, from the climate and the environment, to food security and nutrition through affordable energy and gender equality, indeed place transparency and accountability sustainability commitments from all sectors and by all actors, at all policy levels and junctures, from development finance providers to fund managers and recipients, as an essential ingredient in realising Agenda 2030.

CPDE, like many actors¹¹, has chosen to uphold its commitments to shared prosperity through a transparency and accountability policy. First developed in 2017 and subsequently approved in 2018 on the recommendation of the IAC, the CPDE Transparency and Accountability Policy "defines the principles, rules, and guidelines adopted by CPDE's governance bodies, secretariat/s, and fiscal management organisation/s to exercise transparency and accountability."¹² Members of the Platform are encouraged "to develop their own policies aligned with the Istanbul Principles"¹³ and especially mindful of the 5th Principle (transparency and accountability). Translating these commitments into action to advance development effectiveness thus is twofold: First, they must be seen at work within CPDE itself; second, they need to support and inform those of the wider international development community.

Report methodology: Starting with a case study on CPDE governance, our assessment, applied both inwardly and outwardly and carried out conversantly with the mandate of the IAC to ensure CPDE meets and maintains high standards of transparency, accountability and integrity, in line with the Istanbul Principles¹⁴, builds on previous IAC reports¹⁵ and their

⁷ https://www.catefaehrmann.org/covid_statement

⁸ <https://unu.edu/news/news/covid-19-could-drive-global-poverty-back-over-one-billion-people.html>

⁹ <https://ukcop26.org/>

¹⁰ <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>

¹¹ https://www.eiopa.europa.eu/rulebook/solvency-ii/article-2212_en

¹² CPDE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY – p.1

¹³ CPDE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY – p.1

¹⁴ <https://csopartnership.org/our-accountability/accountability-mechanisms/>

¹⁵ See report summary in annex, p.20-21

invaluable insight as well as on updates from CPDE bodies and their representatives¹⁶, evaluating three main areas, namely:

- Where CPDE is on the right track
- Where CPDE exhibits “best practice”
- Where CPDE needs to fill more gaps

II. Transparent and Accountable Governance: Case Study on current Co-Chair mandate dispositions

In its drive toward greater transparency and accountability CPDE expressed the need for the IAC to play an advisory role on the management of, and communications around, current Co-Chair terms. The IAC in turn wanted to look into this issue owing to what it considered to be abnormalities in Co-Chair mandate present dispositions and CPDE Bye Laws relative to the Co-Chair mechanism¹⁷, seeking to highlight the risks posed by the noted anomalies for CPDE governance effectiveness at large.

This is what we found: First, the CPDE Bye Laws state that Co-Chairs - totalling four (04) representatives on paper - are responsible for ensuring CPDE reach consensus¹⁸, which covers aspects of governance linked to the Co-Chairs themselves, thereby increasing the likelihood of participants in the relevant decision-making processes adopting resolutions that may unjustly favour Co-Chairs over everyone else.

Transparency for CPDE is the active sharing of sufficient, relevant, reliable and timely information in an open manner, including its constitutional documents, its major activities, its performance, its financial position, and governance procedures, in ways that are accessible to all interested people. (While CPDE will be open in its approach, it will also ensure measures to protect rights to privacy and personal data from misuse).

Accountability for CPDE establishes the modalities through which the Platform is held responsible for its actions. Through these means, CPDE endeavours to be open and answerable to its stakeholders for the effective implementation of its policies, actions and the deployment of resources required to achieve its mission and goals.

Second, the Bye Laws do not clarify how matters of difference in opinions and so-called decision-making *deadlocks* are resolved, thus overlooking the necessary quorum protocols to be followed for resolutions to be deemed to have been collectively approved in the event of these situations arising.

¹⁶ Global Secretariat, Programme and Finance and Governance Co-Chairs

¹⁷ Co-Chairs will be elected with a term of 2 years. There will be an attempt to link the exact dates of terms to other key events, such as the ministerial meetings and CPDE GA meetings. The Chairs can serve only one term. There will be a process of retirement by rotation, with half of the Chairs elected each year, to ensure continuity. A Co-chair, after retiring, can stand for nomination again after the passage of one term

¹⁸ Terms of Reference (TOR) CPDE Co-Chairs – Annex 1 – CPDE Bye-Laws, p.9

Third, Co-Chairs “contribute to the achievement of CPDE mandate, vision and objectives by exercising leadership in the CPDE governance bodies, as per the definition and principles put forth in the CPDE founding paper”¹⁹: Among these bodies is the Global Assembly, CPDE’s highest governing body tasked with approving Co-Chair Terms of Reference, number and responsibilities.²⁰ In the specific case of the Global Assembly, this creates more of a horizontal accountability set up for CPDE instead of the vertical accountability configuration suggested in its Organigram (see annex) and Bye Laws, both of which for governance purposes place the Global Assembly over every other CPDE body or mechanism, including Co-Chairs.

The very prominent role of Co-Chairs within CPDE can be seen from other angles. As of December 2012, Co-Chairs participation in the Global Assembly stand at four (04) representatives which translates into Co-Chairs being the only CPDE mechanism to be fully represented in this body. Furthermore, whilst being accountable to the Global Assembly, Co-Chairs are accountable to the Coordinating Committee where they also enjoy full participation and which comprises nineteen (19) representatives to fulfil its oversight functions, of which one (01) is the Chief Executive of CPDE’s Finance Management Organisation.

IAC observations: The presence of Co-Chairs and the Chief Executive of the Finance Management Organisation in the same CPDE body potentially weakens the impartiality of the Chief Executive on issues relating to Co-Chair terms, in particular with regard to matters concerning the extension of these terms and the financial implications they carry. This needs to be seen in the context of a) fund management in CPDE which is conducted based on the Platform’s multi-year programme of three (03) years; and b) extension of Co-Chair mandates happening in a period of relative IAC inactivity, thus creating a quite significant accountability gap in the process: 2020 saw the mandates of all Co-Chairs being extended yet there is no IAC report for that year.

We further note that in practice, since the adoption of the current Bye Laws on 30 October 2020, the mandates of five (05) Co-Chairs out of five (05) have been extended twice, respectively by the Global Assembly and the Coordinating Committee. These extensions on existing extensions have created a situation which will see all Co-Chairs, including one Co-Chair not accounted for in the CPDE Bye Laws, still occupying their seat in 2023 when the current Strategic Plan comes to an end and long after the incumbents’ original two-year term should have been completed: Two of the Co-Chairs will have been in office for four (04) years in a straight run. The other three Co-Chairs will be in office for three (03) years in a row.

CPDE feedback:

Initial feedback on the IAC Inception Report was received from two (02) CPDE bodies: The Steering Committee and the Global Secretariat (see CPDE Organigram in annex). Comments made on the Report were, for the most part, positively inclined;

¹⁹Terms of Reference (TOR) CPDE Co-Chairs – Annex 1 – CPDE Bye-Laws, p.9

²⁰ CPDE Bye Laws, p.2

however, concerns were raised over the case study lacking various elements, ranging from “a discussion of the context that has led to Co-Chair terms double extension”, to “provisions of the Bye Laws allowing for flexibility in the number of Co-Chairs” through “concrete examples on how perceived anomalies in current Co-Chair mandate dispositions could lead to potential conflicts of interest and possible weakening of CPDE accountability mechanisms.”

Acknowledging both the usefulness and timeliness of this feedback, the IAC sought to make the following clarifications:

What this case study does:

- Base its transparency and accountability risk assessment of current Co-Chair mandate dispositions mainly on the updated CPDE Bye-Laws of 30 October 2020.

- Highlight possible ethical risks linked to a distinctive and often prominent participation of Co-Chairs in key CPDE voting processes, as well as in Platform oversight functions, including functions related to CPDE finances.

- Raise CPDE awareness of specific obstacles to the fostering of an accountability culture within CPDE linked to Co-Chair mandates’ double extension having been agreed without due consideration for Co-Chair performance assessment results related to the first mandate extension period, therefore overlooking the possibility of Co-Chair replacement or ending of Co-Chair tenure following such assessments.

- Further highlight ethical issues arising from matters of Co-Chair performance and governance being handled on what appears to be a blanket assessment basis, rather than on individual merit.

- Reflect the need to add, as annex to updated CPDE Bye-Laws and in line with the broader transparency and accountability efforts of CPDE, background information on current Co-Chair mandate dispositions.

- Recommend that similar to the Global Assembly, the Coordinating Committee or indeed the IAC, Co-Chairs be featured in the CPDE Organigram in a standalone fashion, to show clearly “where they sit” in the overall accountability and governance structure of CPDE.

What this case study does not do:

- Seek to present, elaborate on, or clarify the context that has led to double extension of Co-Chair mandates.

- Call into question the flexibility of CPDE Bye-Laws in allowing the statutory number of Co-Chairs to be exceeded.

- Aim to give concrete examples on how the noted anomalies related to current Co-Chair terms could lead to potential conflicts of interest concerning the Co-Chairs and possible weakening of CPDE’s accountability mechanisms.

Our main recommendation is to review Co-Chair participation within CPDE. If there is to be voting on Co-Chair mandates, as good practice and minimum precaution active Co-Chairs should not be part of proceedings.

CPDE should also see to that the actual number of Co-Chairs acting on its behalf matches that stipulated in its updated Bye Laws on the one hand, and Co-Chair duties are exercised within their specified areas of responsibility (each with one category of responsibility with a particular focus²¹) on the other hand, namely:

- Political
- CSO effectiveness, outreach and learning
- Inclusion and communications
- Finance oversight and good internal governance

CPDE should further seek to modify Co-Chair areas of oversight stated in its Bye Laws or it must change those listed on the relevant sections of its website²² to ensure the same information applies everywhere.

However, when it comes to finance oversight, CPDE may want to have this reconfigured to enable power balance to be maintained in its organisational structure, for example by giving its Governance Co-Chair observer status or an advisory role in its Programme and Finance Committee, ProFinCom being the Coordination Committee's subcommittee which looks closely at the financial matters of CPDE²³, instead of having financial oversight functions being largely performed by the Governance Co-Chair alongside ProFinCom.

Failing these remedial actions and if it is no longer possible to implement them as part of current Co-Chair terms, CPDE needs to clearly document and make accessible to stakeholders and those interested, the reasons for the irregular terms of the Co-Chairs, and more broadly, for the abovementioned anomalies. Where the Covid-19 pandemic has been a factor, all the relevant information needs to be provided.

In effect, to avoid non-compliance with its own regulations, CPDE should develop and roll out appropriate mandates, protocols and procedures to adhere to its Bye Laws and practice good governance.

III. Where CPDE is on the right track

a) Strategic Planning

➤ Findings

1. The CPDE Strategic Plan (2020-2023) prioritises promoting development effectiveness with greater focus on effective and inclusive development partnerships

²¹ Terms of Reference (TOR) CPDE Co-Chairs – Annex 1 – CPDE Bye-Laws, p.9

²² <https://csopartnership.org/structure-and-governance/>

²³ CPDE Bye Laws, p.6

as the Platform's contribution to the means of implementation of Agenda 2030.²⁴ In doing so, the Plan which takes on board previous IAC recommendations to be more concise, stands as a progressive tool in restating CPDE overall accountability commitments toward its constituencies and to other development actors on the issue of development effectiveness, as collectively and individually they go about implementing the UN-led Sustainable Development Goals framework.

2. Part of the Plan aims to strongly re-position CPDE toward national-level programming to increase the likelihood of constituencies making lasting impacts where it matters the most: at country level and to the lives of the impoverished and marginalised.²⁵ This not only supports the Agenda 2030 overarching vision of leaving no one behind, but it specifically aligns with the United Nations Development Programme 2022-2025 strategic planning approach which calls for action "where country demands are greatest."²⁶
3. Timelier implementation of audit recommendations by CPDE should be further acknowledged as the current Strategic Plan ties into 2019 audit recommendations concerning the Platform being more connected to actual SDG processes.²⁷ The work of CPDE in this vein can be seen, for example, in its active participation in the context of the High Level Political Forums²⁸ and in its special role in the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation which respectively track country progress on the SDGs and define mutually agreed principles of development effectiveness.
4. More of CPDE's thematic work carried out since the end of the previous planning period (2016-2019) also comes through in the operationalisation of the Voluntary National Reviews from a civil society viewpoint as a clear addition from the Platform in charting country progress on the SDGs with existing processes in mind. This is facilitated by the use of Thematic Task Forces (formerly Working Groups) which ensure that global advocacy is informed by on-ground realities, and serves CPDE national initiatives.²⁹
5. Built on an "action-reflection learning cycle" adopted by CPDE partly shaped by previous IAC reviews, its current Strategic Plan uses a three-pronged approach to private sector engagement in sustainable development to achieve better results across the seventeen (17) SDGs. This includes CPDE advocating government regulation, monitoring business behaviour and promoting micro, small and medium enterprises³⁰, all of which translates into a holistic private sector communications strategy covering multiple entry points and interdependent grounds which in turn supports greater CPDE accountability toward its membership. The engagement of

²⁴ CPDE Strategic Plan 2020-2023, p.2

²⁵ CPDE Strategic Plan 2020-2023, p.2

²⁶ UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025, p.9

²⁷ <https://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Audit-Findings-and-Management-Responses-2021.pdf> p.6

²⁸ <https://csopartnership.org/2021/08/cpde-position-on-the-2021-un-hlpf-ministerial-declaration/>

²⁹ CPDE Strategic Plan 2020-2023, p.32

³⁰ https://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2020-2023-CPDE-Strategic-Plan_EN.pdf p.2

CPDE in monitoring business behaviour, for instance, strengthens its own human rights based approach to development, just as it strengthens likeminded multistakeholder initiatives aiming to add more industries and companies to those with policies, processes, and practices that systematise their human rights approach and respond effectively to serious allegations³¹ as a way to become more accountable to the public.

6. When it comes to private sector engagement *per se*, CPDE through its key messages has set its own, mutually reinforcing indicators³² of what progress looks like, which include:

Official development assistance should be solidarity-based and focused on the poor and vulnerable.

Governments must support SMEs and the social economy, and they must promote sustainable and decent work.

These indicators emphasise a people-centred development model upheld by CPDE in various development fora throughout the years, particularly at the 2016 HLPF when its Position Paper³³ said: **Accountability for all should be at the forefront of any efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.**

➤ Recommendations

1. **Be more impact-led by strengthening “accountability for all” with “accountability on what” and by integrating country SDG impact assessments into CPDE strategic planning, making available region-specific data.** This goes slightly further than previous IAC recommendations in that it calls for a more intentional evaluation of CPDE organisational impact on sustainable development in countries where it is

What the CPDE Transparency and Accountability Policy says:

Strengthen the “culture of social ethics” for CPDE and its member CSOs that will allow them to present evidence and report on what they are, what they do and what are their contribution to sustainable development at the global, regional and national level.

active. Thus it would give greater visibility to CPDE contributions toward Agenda 2030, highlighting tangible results being achieved by its constituencies in countries with a CPDE focal point: Actions to be implemented in this vein may include CPDE establishing more partnerships with stakeholders who are directly involved in SDG delivery at national level, building on existing joint initiatives³⁴; or in the case of the

³¹ <https://www.worldbenchmarkingalliance.org/corporate-human-rights-benchmark/>

³² <https://csopartnership.org/our-core-advocacy/private-sector-accountability/>

³³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=30022&nr=276&menu=3170>

³⁴ <https://csopartnership.org/2021/10/in-focus-cpde-partnership-with-fcoss/>

private sector, developing an advocacy campaign aiming to convince more actors to join initiatives such as the UN Global Compact³⁵ which, as an underlying objective, would support the CPDE Theory of Change to encourage the private sector to do business more responsibly.³⁶

2. **Create a CPDE SDG Dashboard** to show - at different stages of executing the Strategic Plan - Goals that have mostly benefited from Platform and member inputs and those which need more action. This tool should also be enhanced with geographical data.
3. **Strategically increase the presence of CPDE in, closely follow and independently report on, high-level policy dialogue spaces and initiatives where effective private sector engagement at local level is the main topic of discussion** (e.g.: UNDP's Business Call to Action 'Inclusive Business at the Nexus').³⁷ Doing so goes hand in hand with CPDE's three pronged private sector engagement approach and it would help safeguard the position of the Platform as a country focussed, private sector monitoring, development effectiveness watchdog.
4. **Research and join high-level policy spaces where CPDE is not yet active** to optimise its messaging and action, bringing to these spaces CPDE perspectives on development effectiveness and the role of stakeholder transparency and mutual accountability in it being realised.

b) Reporting

➤ Findings

1. The reporting mechanisms and tools of CPDE can be categorised into three main groups of actors (Public, Donors and Constituencies). Accountability to donors in past IAC reports was found to capture more of CPDE focus. Donor reports still appear to be the only ones so far commanding an official response from management, while video versions are only available for Reports to the Public.
2. Reporting tools vary from research studies to programme reports, which provides several entry points for CPDE transparency and accountability commitments to be assessed by a wide range of development practitioners. This is rendered easier by the reports being made available on the CPDE accountability webpage,³⁸ with management remarks included on some of the reports.
3. A survey on the current state of Istanbul Principles implementation within CPDE is available on the Platform website which evaluates the 1st Principle (Respect and promote human rights and social justice) and 2nd Principle (Embody gender equality

³⁵ <https://www.unglobalcompact.org/>

³⁶ https://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2020-2023-CPDE-Strategic-Plan_EN.pdf p.14

³⁷ <https://www.effectivecooperation.org/KampalaPrinciplesinBCTA2021>

³⁸ <https://csopartnership.org/our-accountability/programme-reports/>

and equity while promoting women and girls' rights).³⁹ This demonstrates CPDE's awareness of the need for greater accountability among its members.

➤ Recommendations

1. **Keep Programme Reports in the accountability section of the webpage** to facilitate the analysis thereof from a transparency and accountability perspective, adding a subheading for various report types (e.g.: For Donor, For Members, and For the Public) to simplify the document search.
2. **Conduct regular member surveys on the fifth Istanbul Principle** to further strengthen CPDE ownership of transparency and accountability.
3. **Develop an accountability-driven CPDE Partnerships Policy** that favours collaborative work and joint action with development stakeholders and CPDE members with high accountability credentials.
4. **Have an Accountability Matrix for CPDE bodies and mechanisms** to help ensure what needs to get done gets done.⁴⁰ The matrix may be shared across the CPDE membership to encourage personal accountability and help those responsible to account for similar tasks.
5. **Create official mechanisms for addressing reporting issues raised by the public** as is

What the CPDE Membership Charter says:

Membership is also determined by the following special criteria:

Adherence to the **Istanbul Principles**, the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness, and the CSO Key Asks.

What the CPDE Transparency and Accountability Policy says:

Guided by the human rights based approach (HRBA), it is expected that those CSOs adhering to the Platform carry out their missions and activities in ways that strengthen the capacities and voice of those whose rights are threatened by weaknesses in the implementation of development cooperation. These populations and communities must be able to hold development actors to account.

being done with donor reports through management letters, and clarify mechanisms being used if issues are brought up by members.

6. **Communicate on reasons specific performance indicators were selected in survey design** to improve constituencies and the general public understanding of the importance of these indicators to the development effectiveness conversation and to avoid lack of communication in this regard becoming a “transparency and accountability blind spot”.

³⁹ <https://csopartnership.org/2021/09/cpde-de-review-results-principles-1-and-2/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.orgvue.com/resources/articles/what-is-and-why-have-an-accountability-matrix/#:~:text=An%20accountability%20matrix%20defines%20the,to%20be%20done%2C%20get%20done.>

IV. Where CPDE exhibits “best practice”

a) Comparable accountability to Primary and Secondary Stakeholders

➤ Findings

1. Primary stakeholders of CPDE are viewed as CSOs “that proactively identify with the mission and goals of the Platform⁴¹ while “other actors in development cooperation in pursuit of its mission” count as its secondary stakeholders. These stakeholders include: Other CSOs; Donors providing CPDE funding support; Governments in countries where CPDE operates; and other interest groups (i.e., media, academia, etc.) in development cooperation policy discourse.⁴² Such a distinction is useful for adapting the strategic communications of CPDE toward particular stakeholders whilst also strengthening its overall objectives in terms of promoting transparency and accountability as key principles in development effectiveness.
2. The CPDE Transparency and Accountability Policy recognises all stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental, whether or not they fall into the primary or secondary stakeholder category, as having an interest in CPDE’s progress and CPDE’S value-added to civic space. This speaks to the Policy being designed in such a way that encourages CPDE seeing itself as part of the solution.
3. The Platform has defined four “*whats*” of accountability which it views as integrative and not mutually exclusive; these are accountability for mission (what CPDE aims to achieve), governance (how it achieves its goals), performance (what CPDE in action looks like) and finance (the financial resources necessary and how these resources are used to implement its activities).⁴³ CPDE can therefore harness lessons learned across the board to strengthen its accountability culture.

➤ Recommendations

1. **Strengthen CPDE’s organisational accountability culture** through regular member training and interactive capacity building sessions for CPDE on related issues.
2. **Learn from other actors’ accountability best practices** and adapt these to CPDE mission, governance, performance and finance contexts.
3. **Add a highly scored transparency and accountability criteria in the selection of projects and initiatives supported by CPDE** as part as its Strategic Plan to foster constituent ownership of transparency and accountability principles and CSO development effectiveness. These principles need to be streamlined within the Platform membership beyond constituencies being merely encouraged to develop their own policies in this area. In pursuing this objective, CPDE may find it useful to

⁴¹ <https://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Transparency-and-Accountability-EN.pdf> , p. 4

⁴² <https://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Transparency-and-Accountability-EN.pdf> ,p.4

⁴³ <https://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Transparency-and-Accountability-EN.pdf> , p.6

collate information on how many of its members have developed a Transparency and Accountability Policy, making this information easily accessible for the general public, and to actively communicate the benefits of such a policy to members who do not have one.

What the CPDE Transparency and Accountability Policy says:

The Policy indicates how each what is demonstrated and achieved by the Platform, including through the use of metrics that track performance by linking outcomes that demonstrate results to CPDE goals, priorities and objectives.

b) Using metrics

➤ **Findings**

1. The measurement of document download metrics along the lines of primary and secondary stakeholders has been made easier with a pre-download survey carrying out the following checks: The region where the person seeking access to

the document is based or works, where they found out about the publication, their intended use of the document and most crucially, their sectorial affiliation; documents may be accessed immediately upon completion of the survey. This creates a two-way accountability system between CPDE and its stakeholders.

2. The EDC Library⁴⁴ to some extent presents more advanced features than other sections of the website. It shows which documents are the most viewed as well as countries where viewing numbers are the highest. This is useful for a quick geographical assessment of areas where CPDE needs to communicate better on what it does and where its accountability ratings thus may be improved.
3. Its unique position as the all-inclusive and most diverse platform engaging on effective development cooperation, working across seven (07) regions and eight (08) sectors⁴⁵ gives CPDE an advocacy edge which, especially when combined with the voices of other leading civil society organisations on emerging issues such as the safeguarding of civil society's enabling environment in a digital age⁴⁶, is useful to leverage global civil society SDG action.

What the CPDE Transparency and Accountability Policy says:

Accountability for Performance is premised on the importance of holding CPDE to account for what they have delivered in order to demonstrate results in achieving their objectives.

⁴⁴ <http://edclibrary.csopartnership.org/>

⁴⁵ <https://csopartnership.org/our-constituencies/>

⁴⁶ <https://csopartnership.org/2021/09/civicus-cpde-and-forus-international-organise-forum-on-human-rights-and-civic-space-in-digital-era/>

➤ Recommendations

1. **Create a CPDE Digital Strategy led by an Integrated Digital Performance Management (DPM) plan**, making it part of the CPDE's overall Strategic Plan. The benefits of greater digital performance include greater reporting speed, deeper insights and more accurate reporting of data, all of which would support CPDE in its efforts to be more transparent and accountable and its ownership of development effectiveness as a whole.
2. **Prioritise digital reporting and digital advocacy** where civic space is being restricted to enable continuity of member SDG action and to strategically reinforce the CPDE Digital Strategy: The Platform should aim to move beyond existing barriers to civic space by becoming more innovative in the way its development effectiveness advocacy is being implemented and by tapping into digitalisation to help it do this.

v. Where CPDE needs to fill more gaps

a) Reporting

➤ Findings

1. A work plan has been developed by CPDE based on recommendations from the previous IAC. The plan is based on twenty-seven (27) progress indicators for CPDE development effectiveness, some of which have been filled on the available matrix, whilst others mostly linked to membership issues need to be populated or further updated. This document was shared with the incoming IAC, however it is unclear how much actual reporting on it has been done by CPDE and the extent to which constituencies have been made aware of the plan to ensure transparency in organisational practices.⁴⁷
2. Reports to the Public, particularly in the video version, put little emphasis on statistical and financial data, more of which would be needed to fulfil essential transparency and accountability reporting criteria. For example, where CPDE has partnered with SDG service delivery organisations at the local level, information such as the number of primary or direct beneficiaries reached, the percentage of project finance supported by CPDE in relation to partner organisation(s), the trend of this support in terms of funds increase or decrease as assessed over a specific period of time is hard to find.
3. CPDE research studies have so far focussed on Voluntary National Reviews, having conducted a civil society assessment of these reviews in three consecutive years (2019, 2020 and 2021). Studies have not yet engaged with Voluntary Local Reviews which have been implemented since 2018 and which, to a considerable extent, better reflect the need for "Local Action for Global Impact in Achieving the SDGs" as

⁴⁷ <https://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Transparency-and-Accountability-EN.pdf>, p.2

promoted by the United Nations Agenda 2030 framework. This translates into a key reporting gap as it shows a certain level of disconnect between CPDE development effectiveness positioning and the overarching results-based accountability approach being advocated by the Platform to improve lives at the local level.

4. The CPDE Aid and Development Effectiveness Map although useful for providing a snapshot of CPDE actions at country level, gives little information on actual results obtained from carrying out the activities. Without these results, it would be difficult, as past IAC reports pointed out, to know what CPDE does.
5. The CPDE resources page⁴⁸ reveals a quite significant gap in the level of interest shown to different IAC (and other accountability-related) reports and core documents (CD), as shown below, which suggests more needs to be done to generate stakeholder interest in the reports through user- centric and user-friendliness reporting coupled with report-centric reporting. Questions CPDE may want to ask itself to this end include:
 - Who are the report user groups and what are their specific needs?
 - How well do user groups know the data being presented in the report?
 - What is the relevance of the reporting to user groups?
 - What is the added value of each report to the CPDE reporting landscape?
 - If the reports are part of a series, how is each report being improved on previous publications?

What the CPDE Transparency and Accountability Policy says:

CPDE demonstrates Accountability to its Mission through (...) distribution of knowledge and information generated by the organisation to its stakeholders.

In other words, CPDE reports and main resources are as much as part of its accountability toolbox as the other key elements mentioned in this report.

⁴⁸ <https://csopartnership.org/resources/>

Document downloads of CPDE main resources

(As of 23 October 2021)

Document	Type	Downloads	Notes
IAC 2016 Report	CD	0	Fewer than 50 downloads
IAC 2017 Report	CD	0	
OFF-TRACK, UNDER THREAT: SDGs in the time of Covid – CPDE VNR Survey		1	
Upholding Accountability, Building Solidarity for Effective, People-Centred Development		3	
CPDE Membership Charter	CD	15	
Transparency and Accountability Policy	CD	43	50 downloads or more
Implementing Country Focus	CD	50	
Nairobi Declaration	CD	108	Over 100 downloads
Account, Build, Commit: CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness Strategic Plan 2016 - 2019	CD	111	
IAC 2018 Report	CD	114	
Istanbul Principles	CD	501	Over 500 downloads
The CPDE Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023	CD	605	

➤ Recommendations

- Keep the IAC-led work plan at the forefront of CPDE development effectiveness** daily checks, promptly updating the plan where needed, including by giving special attention to indicators against which no progress or action has been recorded. CPDE may also find it useful to discuss progress with its constituencies.
- Include an additional subheading for CPDE local initiatives on the “WHAT WE DO” page of the website** to show how CPDE is making a difference on the ground and is helping to support constituency engagement with the Voluntary Local Review framework.
- Improve the quality of Reports to the Public and CPDE reports in general** by adding more statistical and financial data such as actual numbers of programme beneficiaries or activity funding levels, as well as by providing disaggregated financial and statistical data (e.g.: on marginalised groups, gender, regions etc.)
- Enhance the Aid and Development Effectiveness Map** by focusing on actual results and regularly updated contents.

5. **Make reporting part and parcel of CPDE engagement with development stakeholders**, using it as a strategic communications lever to give more visibility to CPDE action and seeing it as a development effectiveness tool designed to inform the transparency and accountability journey of stakeholders both within and beyond CPDE.

b) Following through on IAC recommendations

1. Aside from the recommendations and position statements formulated by the Platform, it can be hard at times, as stated above, to know what CPDE action on the ground looks like, which could jeopardise CPDE efforts to build public opinion and trust environments about the importance and impact of the Platform.⁴⁹ In 2016 the first IAC Report raised a similar point concerning the organisational effectiveness of CPDE.

What the CPDE Transparency and Accountability Policy says:

The Platform will communicate freely and accurately with its members and partners, with its donors and with the public, through appropriate tools, such as its website, electronic listserves and document platforms. It will make available relevant information concerning its goals, programs, finances, activities, results, effectiveness and governance.

2. The transparency and accountability objectives being pursued through the CPDE website may be compromised if this tool, which should be seen as particularly critical to CPDE strategic communications, is not routinely updated. For example, there is little evidence of updates being made to the Calendar of Events to inform visitors of planned activities, although this had been raised by the previous IAC.

➤ **Recommendations**

1. **Use the CPDE website as a tool to improve CPDE communications on CPDE action** and routinely update all sections of the website.
2. **Consider IAC recommendations as a package and aim for the appropriate and timely implementation thereof** to avoid partial, insufficient, unbalanced or lack of member and organisational ownership of these recommendations becoming CPDE's weakest link in the realisation of Platform policy coherence for sustainable development.

Policy Coherence in the context of CPDE is about different parts of the Platform working together to identify common goals toward development effectiveness while ensuring the work of one part does not undermine the work of another. It makes us accountable to one another and to others outside of CPDE.

⁴⁹ <https://csopartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Transparency-and-Accountability-EN.pdf> , p.2

Final Remarks

CPDE advocacy strengthening for greater accountability (and other considerations):

- CPDE core advocacy areas - **CSO enabling environment, CSO development effectiveness, conflict and fragility, private sector accountability and climate finance** - need to be periodically reviewed to ensure those selected are most able to support its transparency and accountability advocacies and objectives and strengthen the Platform in its development effectiveness dialogue with other actors. Global policy areas such as trade, for instance, that have traditionally moved the development effectiveness and cooperation needle may be considered as part of the mix when determining future areas of CPDE core advocacy.
- IAC recommendations and Platform audits are useful tools for CPDE development effectiveness risk mitigation. To support these assessments CPDE needs a more comprehensive **Risk Management Strategy** which, whilst discussing the financial and data and security aspects of Platform management highlighted in existing evaluations, would also include such considerations as member risk, partnership risk, loss of income risk, governance risk, talent risk etc.

VI. Conclusion

Having a Transparency and Accountability Policy is a good start but this alone is not enough for an organisation to truly demonstrate its commitments to both principles. As a global platform advocating for a more open, more equal and more just society, CPDE faces the added challenges of implementing its policy in a way which reflects the universality of the sustainable development goals whilst considering the aspirations, voices and perspectives of its geographically spread and most diverse constituent base. The Platform needs to maintain and continually fall back on its action-reflection learning approach to do just that, just as it needs to capitalise on digitalisation to better communicate on what it does. Moreover, with uncertain times having become the norm, and with the Istanbul Principles more relevant today than ever before, CPDE needs to think outside the box to advance development effectiveness, forging new and innovative partnerships driven by common purpose, hope and ambition, and going where its action can make a real and long lasting difference to those who need it most. Indeed, the Platform should see the Covid-19 pandemic as a call to action, strategically strengthening its advocacy from within so it does more than just advocate and can inspire other actors navigating the road to recovery. Put simply, CPDE should always be asking “are we on the right track?”, “do we practice what we preach?”

Annex

A. Summary of Findings and Recommendations of Previous IAC Reports

2016

The first IAC was appointed in October 2015 and their first Report was submitted to the Global Council (GC) dated November 2016. They reviewed the CPDE website, financial procedures, annual financial report and undertook two case studies of advocacy work in the Central America and the Caribbean sub-region and CSO strengthening work in West Africa. They found that while accountability and transparency upwards to donors appear good, accountability and transparency outwards to CPDE members and actors as well to the wider civil society and the general public was poor. The CPDE website, being the primary mechanism for information dissemination, lacked important information, written in specialist language resulting in being unclear on exactly what CPDE does and has achieved. The governance structures were not clearly explained on the website and appear not to have been updated. While CPDE stated its intention of promoting development effectiveness, it was not clear how CPDE applied the principles of development effectiveness to its own activities. IAC had questions about the accountability relationships between the Regions, Coordinating Committee (CC), Co-Chairs and the Global Secretariat (GS). The 2016 IAC Report recommended that:

- a) **CPDE should, as a matter of urgency, develop and agree on a Transparency and Accountability Policy (TAP) in accordance with its own guidelines contained in the toolkit (between pages 46 to 53), to implement the 5th Istanbul principle;**
- b) **As far as possible, documents, and especially the web site, should be written to be understandable to the interested observer, and in particular the broader CSO community, not just for the specialist;**
- c) **Governance structures, and the global secretariat, should reflect regularly on how they apply the principles of development effectiveness to themselves;**
- d) **The Co-Chairs, CC and global secretariat should review their own internal reporting arrangements, to ensure that matters are dealt with at the appropriate level.**

2017

The second IAC report was dated September 2017. Their key findings were: (a) little evidence of progress on their recommendations since their last report; (b) no feedback received from the CC on their last report; (c) Information requested had been slow to arrive and therefore (d) **the recommendations in their 2017 report was repeated. At the time of writing their report, the 2016 Audit report was still not available and there was no Report to the Public (RTTP).** Another case study was undertaken relating to accountability of work done in 2016 of the Europe Region which highlighted that more work needs to be done on inclusiveness. Comments were “it is difficult (for participants) to understand why it is important and (participants) don’t feel like members.” IAC **struggled to find documentation** either from CPDE, European region website for a more detailed review of the work. IAC **developed a chart of Indicators of progress against their indicators**, initially for their own

benefit and then shared with CPDE bodies to better understand IAC's work and expectations. The Chart was annexed to their report. However, the column on progress is not populated.

2018

The third IAC report was dated October 2018. The TAP had been drafted and reviewed by the IAC as of a high standard and **a sound basis for all future work** and recommended ways in which it could be further improved. Although not yet endorsed by GC at the time, the IAC used it as the basis for their assessment in the 2018 report. While the website layout and style had improved, there were **serious deficiencies – no reports of constituency activities, no report to the public for previous years and no audited financial reports. The 2017 audit report was still not available.** A case study was undertaken of the feminist sector and again **documentation was scarce** either from CPDE or the sector to enable an in-depth review.

Their findings include – transparency and accountability outwards is improving however, information on what CPDE has achieved is less clear, with no audit report and no report to the public for 2017. The challenge is to now put the TAP into practice.

There were 3 broad recommendations:

1. **To ensure that timely reports are provided to external stakeholders and the general public;**
2. **To apply the framework of the Transparency and Accountability policy as soon as is practicable, to ensure that there is effective engagement of members; and**
3. **To make sure that the web site is an effective mechanism for supporting the policy, in line with the proposed methodology included with it.**

B. CPDE Structure and Organigram

