



OXFAM
International

Oxfam position on the Review of the European Consensus on Development

1. Introduction

Why is a revision of the European Consensus on Development needed?

The policies that set the European framework on development, the [2005 European Consensus](#) and the [2011 Agenda for Change](#), were crafted against the backdrop of the Millennium Development Goals. Since then, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been agreed, with the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its heart. The 2030 Agenda breaks fresh ground in the fight against poverty by moving beyond targets solely in developing countries to better protect the planet, reduce economic and social inequalities, and promote human rights everywhere. Therefore, the EU's own, older framework is no longer fully aligned with the long-term vision for sustainable development agreed globally.

In what circumstances should the EU not agree a revised European Consensus on Development?

According to the European Commission, the revised European Consensus on Development aims to adapt and update the EU's development policy to respond to the 2030 Agenda, helping to ensure coherence and consistency of actions at EU level and in EU cooperation with partner countries, as well as better coordination with Member States' responses to the new Agenda.

In principle Oxfam supports this effort to update EU's development framework. However, we also note that this review is taking place at a time when the integrity of European development aid as a tool to fight poverty and inequality is under pressure, in particular as a result of policies adopted as part of the migration control agenda. Therefore Oxfam will welcome and support a revised Consensus that explicitly and implicitly supports sustainable and just development, but will call for the rejection of a revision if it weakens the poverty and inequality focus of European development cooperation.

A revised Consensus will be an improvement if it: a) upholds the original shared values, goals, principles and commitments in the implementation of the development policies by the European Commission and EU governments; and b) increases coherence and consistency of policies in line with the agreements made by the international community in 2015, so that they are conducive to inclusive sustainable development and reverse growing inequality.

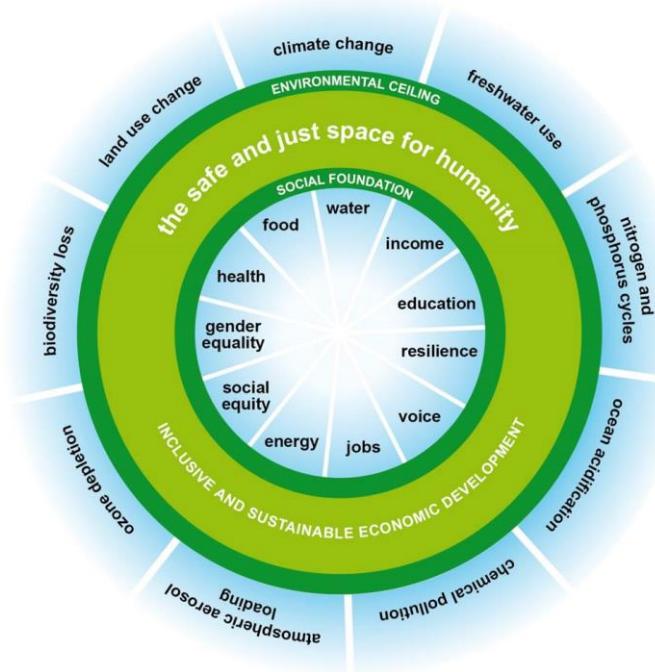
If instead a revised Consensus reinforces, for example, the securitisation of aid and its use as leverage with development cooperation partners to gain their cooperation on state security and migration control, then it should not be adopted.

What should drive the revision of the European Consensus Development?

The new European Consensus should be a policy framework that contributes to sustainable development within planet boundaries and finds a safe and just space for humanity. In Oxfam's vision¹, achieving sustainable development means ensuring that all people have the resources they need – such as food, water, health care, and energy – and live within systems that allow them to claim and fulfil their human rights. And it means ensuring that humanity's use of natural resources does not stress critical Earth-system processes – by causing climate change or biodiversity loss, for example.

¹ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/safe-and-just-space-humanity>

The goal should be to achieve development between the “ceiling” of what the planet can sustain and the “floor” of what is required for human needs and dignity. This can be visually charted as a doughnut, where the social foundation for sustainable development forms an inner boundary, below which there are many dimensions of human deprivation. The environmental ceiling forms an outer boundary, beyond which are many dimensions of environmental degradation. Between the two boundaries lies an area which represents an environmentally safe and socially just space for humanity to thrive in. It is also the space in which inclusive and sustainable economic development takes place.



The challenge of moving into the safe and just space for humanity is complex because social and planetary boundaries are interdependent. Environmental stress can exacerbate poverty, and vice versa. Policies aimed at moving back within planetary boundaries can, if poorly designed, push people further below the social foundation, and vice versa. But well-designed policies can promote both poverty eradication and environmental sustainability – bringing humanity into the doughnut from both sides.

The SDGs have strong ambitions: seeking to end all forms of poverty, and ensure access for all to food, water, sanitation, energy, health care, education, work, housing and more by 2030. What will success look like? It's pretty clear: essentially 100% of people need to enjoy these rights. Therefore, the Consensus needs to evaluate all aspects of European development policy in light of this indicator for success.

2. Minimum criteria for a revised European Consensus on Development

While Oxfam believes that the Consensus should be updated to align with the 2030 Agenda, that update must also ensure adherence to other recognized principles of development cooperation and to the EU's own obligations, including the Lisbon Treaty commitment to poverty eradication. Some of the criteria that a revised Consensus should meet include:

1. Poverty eradication, environmental sustainability & equality are at the center. All policies, initiatives, funding instruments, and agreements should have poverty eradication, environmental sustainability and the reduction of economic and gender inequality as key objectives. EU development policy should outline interactions with other EU policies that have an impact on sustainable development and aid for people in need, and support low-emissions and climate resilient development trajectories. This means a renewed look at the effectiveness of current obligations for policy coherence for development and the instruments and power attributed to it.

- **Red line:** This criterion will not be met if, in the development of EU trade, migration, energy and agricultural policies the interests of state security, short term corporate gain, and/or European GDP growth are promoted at the expense of people's interests and needs.

2. Respect for human rights principles and obligations underpins development cooperation. Respect for human rights is both an objective in itself and part of the enabling environment for development. It is also a direct obligation for the EU and its member states, and this obligation can in no

way be outsourced; violations of human rights arising directly or indirectly from the implementation of European development cooperation are the responsibility of European governments. Ensuring people are at the centre of development aid sometimes means engaging with governments whose human rights records require improvement, but it also means that such engagement is based on fostering democratic norms, respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, and the rule of law in order to promote political systems able to manage developmental change sustainably and peacefully.

- **Red line:** This criterion will not be met if there is insufficient commitment to including the human rights situation as a fundamental determining factor in the framework of development cooperation. This includes ensuring human rights safeguards, and that credible and feasible mitigation of threats to fundamental rights that could arise as a result of development cooperation projects as a prerequisite for their approval.

3. Ownership of development strategies lies in partner countries. The EU and partner countries must share responsibility and accountability for their joint efforts in partnership, and development cooperation should as much as possible align with national strategies that have been planned, formulated, and discussed by developing country governments, parliamentarians and civil society. This requires empowering the citizens of developing cooperation partner countries and their governments to work together to develop their priorities to fight poverty, social injustice, climate change and inequality.

- **Red line:** This criterion will not be met if support for civic space is not fully integrated within development cooperation frameworks or if development cooperation frameworks and modalities become de-coupled from national development strategies.

4. Private sector cooperation enhances development without undermining the public sector. SDG implementation will require significant financing and the private sector will need to play its part. However despite the increasing trend of committing to corporate social responsibility, huge gaps exist between corporate policies and actual practice. Addressing this, including through ex-ante commitments from business, means enforcement of safeguards not only to 'do no harm' but to 'do good' in core business based on the UN Guiding Principles of Business & Human Rights; ensuring full transparency of contracts, investing in full accountability and participation of projects with private sector involvement; ensuring risk of investment is not unduly transferred to communities or government actors, minimizing debt incurred; and ensuring good corporate governance, including the fair contribution of tax due. The Consensus should also actively promote alternative business models which are structured to keep more value with workers and producers² and represents a more 'humane economy'³.

- **Red line:** This criterion will not be met if, where the EU seeks to leverage or co-finance programmes with the private sector, development additionality is not demonstrable, risks for people and the environment aren't effectively minimized, and the public sector is undermined rather than strengthened.

5. The role of civil society in poverty eradication and fight against inequality is recognised. The right to organise and the freedom to speak out against poverty, inequality and injustice require legal, political and social space for civil society. This space enables citizens to participate and hold governments and the private sector to account. Civic space is therefore a critical enabler in the fight against poverty and pursuit of social justice and ensures there are checks and balances. Often, resources flow towards initiatives that accumulate the greatest political support of powerful groups rather than to the most effective and inclusive education, health, or economic investments that improve service delivery and pro-poor development. To tackle that fundamental problem of power imbalance, citizens need to have the freedom to exercise civic power – through collective action, alliances with reformers within public institutions, and support of other national and international actors. Supporting these roles means ensuring

² See examples on page 24 in [Oxfam's 3-year update](#) of the Behind the Brands work

³ See '[The Time is Now. Building a human economy for Africa](#)', Oxfam. 2016.

that civil society is not only consulted, but is directly integrated as a stakeholder in the process of design, execution and monitoring of development cooperation.

- **Red line:** This criterion will not be met if there aren't clear and proactive channels for the meaningful inclusion and participation of civil society as partners and not only "recipients" of aid, or if the integral role that civil society plays in monitoring and holding government and private actors to account is not integrated within aid modalities. Stand-alone support for civil society is important but not sufficient.

6. Adequate and appropriate resources are ensured: As Europe expands its commitments to address climate change, displacement and migration, and other challenges, it is crucial that there is sufficient funding allocated to these areas *in addition* to the budgets needed to meet existing aid commitments. Such additionality cannot be substituted by increasing flexibility of development instruments; this simply risks depleting the resources needed fight poverty and inequality directly. Further, European development aid must not be diverted, distorted, reduced, or instrumentalised. The fundamental principles that underpin ODA must be upheld, and this means: preserving reporting guidelines without dilution aimed at "counting" more actions as development without increasing aid; strictly rejecting "tied aid" of any kind; and ensuring that other objectives – including state security and commercial interests – do not supersede development goals.

- **Red line:** This criterion will not be met if the Consensus does not include a specific commitment to allocate aid funding solely on the basis of need, with the ultimate goal of addressing poverty and inequality, in line with international standards and commitments, and without any conditionality not linked directly to its aid effectiveness and/or the respect of fundamental rights.

7. The Consensus is binding for the EU as a whole. It is crucial that the EU's member states as well as its institutions wholly commit implementing and abiding by a Consensus on Development aid.

- **Red line:** This criterion will not be met if the Consensus only applies to or is only implemented by the EU institutions and not by member states.

3. Policy coherence and the development nexus

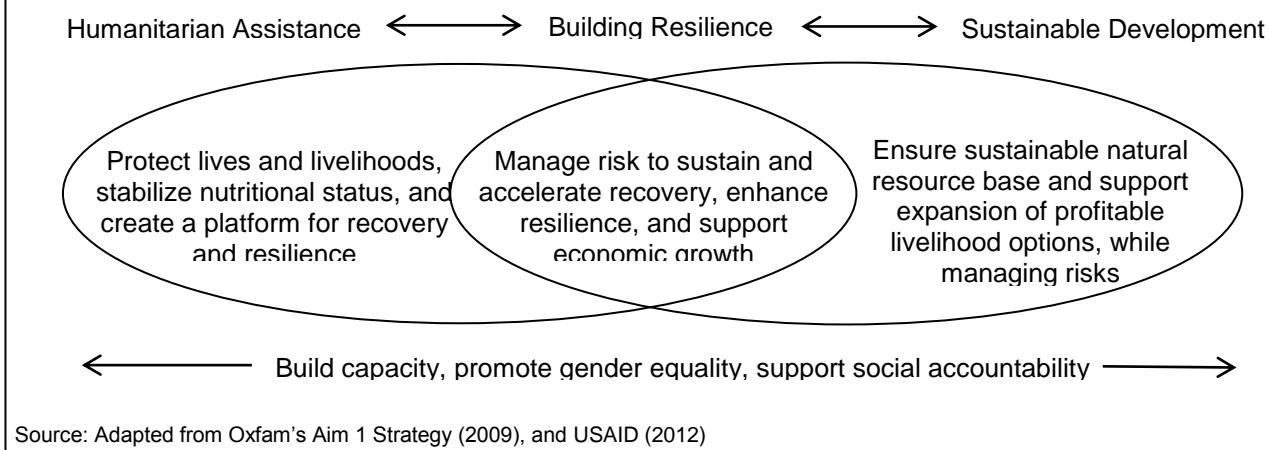
The 2030 Agenda and the formulation of the SDGs recognise the nexus of development with issues across the economic, social, and environmental spheres. The new European Consensus on Development will need to navigate how to increase the coherence of development cooperation policy with e.g. humanitarian action, security, climate change and migration, to name a few key intersecting policy areas. Crucially, this must be achieved – and resourced -- while maintaining a strong focus on the core objective for development aid: the reduction and eradication of poverty and inequality.

Development-Humanitarian Nexus

When fighting poverty it is misleading to talk about moving from humanitarian to development responses; both should be planned simultaneously as early as possible and as far as possible. Effective measures to achieve resilience need to address the acute aspects of a crisis -- i.e. short term emergencies (through early action, disaster preparedness and risk reduction) -- while also addressing the chronic long-term root causes of vulnerability, especially through social protection.

Building resilience is not only about technical approaches to bridging the humanitarian-development divide at a programme level, but also ensuring that development interventions go much beyond 'doing no harm' and instead 'do good' across the intervention. It's also crucial to ensure coherence between objectives within a common strategy and ensure subsequent coordination of funding, so as to not waste time or resources.

Figure 1: Situating Resilience



Source: Adapted from Oxfam's Aim 1 Strategy (2009), and USAID (2012)

Some specific recommendations to address the development-humanitarian nexus are:

- **Integrate Disaster Risk Reduction:** mainstreamed DRR activities should be supported under humanitarian aid instruments in addition to a much larger investment in DRR within development programmes.
- **Recognise the inequality of food insecurity:** exposure to hunger is caused by broken food systems where imbalances in power, marginalization and unequal access to resources create and maintain vulnerability to food and nutrition insecurity.
- **Connect emergency food security and sustainable livelihoods** Emergency food security interventions should be strategically connected with strengthening sustainable livelihoods in the long term to reduce the exposure of poor people's assets to hazards and enable marginalized and impoverished people to develop their capacities.
- **Invest in social protection:** allow households to develop their own capacities to mitigate the negative impact of future crises and external shocks that they are exposed to. In the short-term, seasonal 'safety nets' or 'social security nets' can be provided within humanitarian responses. In the long term, social protection provides support to households to reduce, prevent and overcome risks that threaten livelihoods (e.g. cash transfers to targeted households to overcome the vicious cycle of debt and loss of assets.)

Development-Security Nexus

In fragile and post-conflict situations, development can be interrupted and undermined by ongoing violence, non-violent or unresolved conflicts, weak state institutions, a lack of rule of law, and corruption. Fragility and lack of security are of particular concern for the development agenda as poverty becomes increasingly concentrated in conflict-affected states. Addressing the security-development nexus in fragile environments should be underpinned by a long-term commitment which prioritises the establishment of the rule of law and democratic institutions, and addresses the underlying drivers of conflict and fragility, including justice and reconciliation issues, while empowering women, children, youth and marginalised groups as key actors for peace, in line with the provisions of the 'New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States'.

Some specific recommendations to address the development-security nexus are:

- **Use conflict-sensitive approaches:** the design of development interventions should be informed by conflict analysis, ensure a conflict-sensitive approach, and include objectives aimed at tackling the root causes and drivers of conflict.
- **Put human security first:** The revised Consensus should explicitly affirm that "security" within the development-security nexus refers to the security of the individual and society at large, i.e. human

security. State security – i.e. territorial integrity and control, including border control -- is not an acceptable lens or objective for development cooperation.

- **Respect human rights:** general engagement with third countries should be based on democratic norms, human rights and the rule of law in order to promote political systems which are able to manage conflict and broader developmental change peacefully. When this is absent, the risk is that European cooperation strengthens the hands of dysfunctional and abusive allies, further entrenching the status quo and thus storing up instability for the future.
- **Prioritise long-term strategies:** the priority for the EU should be sustainable peace and conflict prevention through bottom-up, people-focused and long-term strategies independent of short-term crisis response and/or immediate domestic political imperatives. The EU should consider its development policy as an investment in global stability and conflict-sensitivity should be prioritised as a cross-cutting theme.
- **Ensure a gender perspective:** although SDG 16 does not include any references to gender or women, its targets call for inclusive decision-making and equal access to justice for all. Achieving this requires not only gender sensitivity, including in conflict analysis, and attention to gender equality but the inclusion and participation of women stakeholders.

Development-Climate Nexus

Climate change is rapidly changing the nature of human suffering and instability globally and represents a major threat to the prospects of development for millions of people. Climate change is a major driver of migration and displacement, both internally within countries and external. The EU has a duty and commitments to support adaptation efforts in *all* poor and vulnerable countries. However, in view of the current policy priorities to reduce migration to Europe, it should not be tempted to instrumentalise these commitments by employing them for its own migration management purposes.

SDG-compatible development policy entails that all development interventions contribute to low-carbon development pathways and avoid lock-in to high pollution development pathways. Considering the world is already locked into at least 1.5 degrees warming, all development interventions must take the future warmer world into account, building in resilience to changing weather patterns and shocks, and ensure that the long term sustainability of interventions is core to the project.

The cost of developing in a warmer world is several times more than what current aid budgets as well as future aid commitments plan for. UNEP estimated in March 2016 that the cost of adapting to climate change in developing countries is much higher than what was previously thought, rising between \$280 and \$500 billion per year by 2050.

Some specific recommendations to address the development-climate nexus are:

- **Supplement aid budgets to support climate adaptation:** Aid budgets should grow rapidly, towards and beyond the 0.7% commitment, and be supplemented by innovative sources of public finance to boost overall available public support for developing countries.
- **Increase support for development activities that also reduce emissions of potent short-lived climate pollutants.** Development programs that also mitigate emissions of black carbon, methane, or other short-lived climate pollutants will significantly reduce near-term global warming and help meet SDG objectives. Reducing short-lived climate pollutants can improve air quality and public health, reduce crop losses and improve food security, and promote clean energy.
- **Increase integration of climate resilience in development programmes:** In addition to weather hazards, climate change will bring longer terms shifts that require responses – such as temperature increases that harm crops, water scarcity, seasonal changes, glacial melt, sea level rise, etc. These require specific responses separate to hazard interventions.
- **Speed up real emissions reductions of European energy, transport and agricultural systems.** The current -40% emissions reductions pledge by the EU for 2030 is not sufficient to keep the globe on a trajectory to meet the 1.5 degree goal agreed in Paris. EU development policy should not serve to merely attempt to put out the fires which its energy policy is causing across the world.

Development-Migration Nexus

The links between migration and development are complex, but a defining feature is a well-established positive correlation between rising development and increased migration. Therefore migration – including rural-urban, regional and the much smaller portion that is international – is an important factor to account for across development cooperation planning. The aim should be to take a people-centred approach to harnessing and maximising the numerous benefits that migration has been shown to have for sending and especially receiving communities, while mitigating the negative impacts.

People may be on the move for many and multiple reasons, and unfortunately some of these are the negative consequences of inequality, climate change, fragility and conflict. Such displacement requires specific measures to address the causes and consequences, together and separately from broader migration. In this respect there is also a strong link to the humanitarian-development nexus, as forced displacement requires both humanitarian and development responses.

While the nexus between migration and development must be harnessed for the potential it represents, development cooperation must continue to be based on the eradication of poverty and reduction of inequality, for the benefit of recipient populations, in a way which also adheres to development effectiveness principles, recognizing that overall migration may increase or decrease relative to development. “Tackling” migration is not an objective for development aid and development aid cannot be used to stop migration flows. Geographic allocation of development aid must continue in accordance with need; a country or region’s potential to be a source of outward migration is not an appropriate criterion. Aid is not a tool for controlling migration.

Some specific recommendations to address the development-migration nexus:

- **Respect and reinforce mobility and free movement areas.** Mobility contributes to innovation, economic growth and personal development and should not be stifled. Mobility and free movement are important aspects of regional integration, as demonstrated by the European Union itself.⁴ Effective implementation of existing regional free movement agreements, like the ECOWAS Free Movement of Persons’ Protocols, must be supported and never infringed.
- **Include displaced populations as a development constituency,** encouraging host governments to integrate them in national development planning and mobilizing the financial support as donors to support this. As recognised by the European Commission Communication “Lives in Dignity”, protracted displacement in particular requires a development response.
- **Avoid linkages between displacement/migration and countering violent extremism.** It must be recognised that insecurity and violence are causes of displacement, and not their effect. Cooperation to counter terrorism and instability cannot come at the price of scapegoating displaced populations or putting the security of states before that of people.

Development-Financial Resources Nexus

Many countries around the world will probably be able to achieve the SDGs without a strong aid intervention. They will do so because their governments, supported by active civil society organizations and civic engagement, are more likely to invest their own tax revenues in public services, and because free, fair, open and functioning markets could attract the capital necessary to fuel growth. The poorest governments, however, can neither raise sufficient revenues domestically nor attract private investment—they will need aid to support even basic service provision. But if aid can also be used to support increased revenue collection and more efficient and accountable service delivery, it could accelerate the

⁴ In the EU, post-enlargement mobility has boosted the long-term GDP of the “older” Member States (EU-15) by 1%, according to a report by Holland, Dawn, Tatiana Fic, Ana Rincon-Aznar, Lucy Stokes, and Paweł Paluchowski, *Labour Mobility within the EU – The impact of enlargement and the functioning of the transitional arrangements*, National Institute of Economic and Social Research, 2011.

end of extreme poverty. In other words, aid is most valuable not for its overall impact, but for the extent to which it can ensure that the most impoverished and most marginalized are not left behind.

To contribute to this the EU needs to ensure that its development aid is not diverted, distorted, reduced, or instrumentalised. Aid must remain true to its primary purpose of eradicating poverty, promoting sustainability, reducing inequality, advancing human rights and meeting humanitarian need.

Some specific recommendations to address the development-financial resources nexus are:

- **Meet existing aid commitments and additional needs for climate change adaptation:** (0.7% for EU 15, 0.33% for EU 13) by 2020 to ensure there is adequate support to developing countries to meet their own SDG commitments. This includes ensuring that as aid used for climate purposes grows, the overall aid budget grows too, towards and beyond the 0.7%
- **Prevent instrumentalisation of aid for short-term foreign policy objectives:** Development cooperation must be based on the needs of recipients and not used as foreign policy leverage or concentrated geographically on the basis of strategic interests, e.g. countries of origin and transit for migration to Europe. Principled aid can never be tied to donor interests.
- **Clearly adhere to the Busan Principles:** A greater level of ambition is needed to ensure that aid enhances democratic accountability in those countries that receive aid; that it delivers results that matter for impoverished people; that aid is delivered in a predictable and transparent manner so recipients can use it more effectively; and, that more aid is provided to build democratic ownership and to strengthen essential public services.
- **Stop expanding the rules at the expense of poverty alleviation:** Any revision of existing reporting rules, such as the ongoing processes within the OECD DAC Committee, must respect the fundamental principles underpinning the concept of ODA, and must preserve or strengthen the integrity of this international yardstick. Changes in reporting guidelines may have major political implications, and some of the revisions discussed at the OECD High Level Meetings risk incentivizing a re-direction of aid away from poverty alleviation.
- **Stop inflating aid:** Oxfam believes that supporting refugees is vital - it forms part of our international responsibilities and human rights obligations - and urges governments to find the resources to meet the needs of refugees arriving at their borders. However, raiding aid budgets to do so should not be an option. Instead, governments should build whole-of-government approaches to receiving and resettling refugees, using their general budgets and/or other relevant line ministries' budget. It is important this does not come at the cost of the world's most impoverished or marginalized people.
- **Ensure private sector role in development has the right aim:** Commercial interests should not supersede developmental goals. Despite the potential in having a larger role for the private sector in development, there are huge risks associated with mixing private finance with public development funding. No sufficient social, environmental or human rights safeguards are yet in place to ensure that private finance in development reaches its stated goals. The quality of aid is threatened as private finance tends to be much less transparent and accountable than public aid funding.
- **Help boost domestic revenues:** Beside the impact of a broken global tax system on the tax base of many developing countries, the tax landscape in those countries is generally marked by deep-rooted unfair taxation policies and practices. It often leads to low domestic revenue collection. Aid should be increased to support fair tax collection through capacity building of tax administration and more civil society involvement. This will boost the implementation of more performant tax systems and hold decision makers accountable. It can be done through capacity building of civil society partners to achieve policy reforms; advocacy, research, and evidence-based policy recommendations to increase accountability; or support to critical engagement and dialogue with all stakeholders to engage with the private sector which is also a driver of change.