# Ethics and Effectiveness – Closer to International Standards

**Report on opinion survey conducted among Slovak NGDOs**

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## 1. Introduction

Throughout its history, international development assistance provided by government institutions and non-governmental organisations has been criticised for its ineffectiveness. Millions of dollars spent in the last fifty years on improving the people's living standards in the Global South have not generated the expected prosperity and development. Despite manifold achievements, for example, in the fight against diseases like tuberculosis,[1] the fact is that some mistaken political priorities, badly planned and inconsistently executed projects have raised doubts whether the funds provided by taxpayers and individual donations have been used effectively. The pressure from the general public, academic and political elites and representatives of the non-governmental sector has pushed the question of aid effectiveness into the foreground. As a result, international agreements were signed to address the issue, for example the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008).[2] These agreements have changed the priorities of international development cooperation and introduced greater equality, cooperation and harmonisation into the donor-recipient relationship. The Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles (IP),[3] which followed in 2010, have anchored these values and principles in the activities of civil society organisations.

The Istanbul Principles contain eight core standards (respect for human rights, gender equality, democratic ownership, environmental sustainability, transparency and accountability, equitable partnerships, knowledge sharing and positive sustainable change). They represent a summary of best practices and know-how for the use of non-governmental sector. Since their adoption by the delegates at the global initiative Open Forum,[4] the discussion on aid effectiveness has continued, as witnessed by the adoption of the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation[5] agreed upon at the 4th High Level

[1] Based on the WHO data from October 2012, between 1990 and 2011, the number of deaths caused by tuberculosis decreased by 41%. http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs104/en/
[2] The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and The Accra Agenda for Action http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf
[3] Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/IMG/pdf/final_istanbul_cso_development_effectiveness_principles_footnote_december_2010-2.pdf
[4] Open Forum www.cso-effectiveness.org
[5] The importance of the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation is underlined by the fact that the document represents a common vision and a joint commitment of not only the civil society and the governments of traditional donor countries, but also of the governments of Russia, Brazil, India and China and representatives of the private sector. http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/IMG/pdf/outcome_document_-_final_en_-2.pdf

Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, South Korea (2011). Nonetheless, the Istanbul Principles continue to serve as an important reference point and a stimulus for discussion about effectiveness of civil society organisations engaged in development cooperation.[6] This discussion is reinforced by the atmosphere of economic crisis in donor countries, accompanied by a decline of available resources and an acute need to achieve the best results with the least amount of money. NGO networks and platforms uniting development NGOs on a regional and national level are the principal actors in the process of increasing effectiveness of development NGOs. Not only can they draw on the knowledge and experience of their members, but they can simultaneously introduce professional standards to increase effectiveness – by means of capacity building or through establishment of various internal mechanisms and tools.

The Slovak NGDO Platform also adheres to the Istanbul Principles and initiated an active discussion among its members on the effectiveness of development cooperation carried out by Slovak NGDOs. Based on the analysis of the adherence to the Istanbul Principles prepared towards the end of 2011,[7] further capacity building and better compliance with the principles of transparency and democratic ownership were identified as the principal needs. In an effort to move forward in the discussion on aid effectiveness, at the end of 2012 the Slovak NGDO Platform carried out an opinion survey among its member organisations to assess their views of the need of a Code on Effectiveness and Ethics. This development in Slovakia reflects similar trends as in other European countries.

## 2. Examples from abroad[8]

In its strategic plan for the years 2009-2015[9] the Irish Platform **DÓCHAS** committed itself to improving the impact and quality of its members' activities based on the experiences of all parties involved. In an effort to fulfil this vision, in 2011, DÓCHAS officially committed itself to the IP and began to formulate its own principles to serve as a basis for quality standards adopted in the period 2011–2014. DÓCHAS currently has several codes of conduct, including the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages[10] signed by 62 organizations responsible for monitoring compliance and adjustment making to the code.

Already in 2010, the **VENRO,** Platform in Germany, adopted a Code of Conduct on Transparency, Organization Management and Control[11] following a years-long discussion process with its members. Although this code of conduct does not explicitly refer to the IP, to a large extent the ethical principles and professional standards contained within are based on the same foundations and goals. In this document, the VENRO members commit themselves to communicating clearly and openly about their successes and their cha-

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[6] In Slovakia, the term "Non-governmental development organizations" is frequently used and will be used in this text; whether in full or in its abbreviated version "NGDOs".
[7] Application of the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness by Slovak NGOs (Analysis), December 2011 http://www.mvro.sk/sk/e-kniznica/category/2-publikacie
[8] Several comprehensive databases are available as a source of information on codes of conduct on effectiveness and ethics. They have been prepared by civil society organizations around the world such as One World Trust, whose database is available here: http://www.oneworldtrust.org/csoproject/cso/initiatives/results/?loc=country&country=185 or an overview prepared by the Scottish Platform of development NGOs: http://www.nidos.org.uk/learning/ExamplesCodesGoodPractice2009.asp#ethicsandconduct
[9] Dóchas Strategic Framework 2009-2015 http://www.dochas.ie/pages/resources/documents/Strategic_framework_2009-2015.pdf
[10] Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/5/Images_and_Messages.pdf
[11] VENRO- Verhaltenskodex Transparentz, Organisationsführung und Kontrolle http://www.venro.org/fileadmin/redaktion/dokumente/Dokumente-2011/Januar_2011/Kodex_Transparenz_v06.pdf

llenges as well as evaluate the impact of their projects according to the criteria of relevance, feasibility, fairness and accuracy.

The British Platform **BOND**, uniting 370 NGOs, supports and encourages greater effectiveness of its network of organizations through various programmes. Through the so called "Bond Health Check,"[12] for example, organizations can check the effectiveness of their performance in the areas of partnerships, programmes, external relations and monitoring. The "Bond Improve It Framework"[13] is a useful tool for the Platform to measure and present the results of its work and identify its strengths and weaknesses. Like many other European platforms, Bond has also signed the Code of Conduct on Images and Messages[14] prepared by **CONCORD.**[15] This code of conduct was adopted in 2007 and applies not only to non-governmental organizations but also to other institutions engaged in international development, such as the media. The code of conduct serves as a guide for its signatories to selecting appropriate materials in their communication strategies in a way that preserves human dignity and integrity.

In Hungary there were only a few initiatives in the past addressing the issue of CSO effectiveness in the field of international development. The Hungarian platform **HAND** has carried out a survey on CSO effectiveness among Hungarian development NGOs and its findings will be summarised and published in the form of a study in the near future. Survey findings show that only few Hungarian NGOs are well versed in or even familiar with the Istanbul Principles as such, however, all of them more or less consciously try to live up to certain internal organisational principles, which are very much in line with some of the IP. Almost every organisation recognises the need of starting a coordinated common reflection on the aspects of effectiveness in their work.

In 2012 the Polish platform **GRUPA ZAGRANICA** established a task force *Code of Conduct*. The work of the task force reflects the Istanbul Principles and its aim is to update and extend the Code of Conduct agreed upon in 2001 (Guiding Principles of Polish Non-governmental Organisations Working Abroad). Together with the Code of Conduct there will be implementation tools and indicators to monitor its compliance.

In the Czech Republic, the discussion on the code of conduct on effectiveness led by the Czech platform **FoRS** culminated in the adoption of the Code on Effectiveness[16] in 2011 which contains direct references to the IP. This code of conduct is binding for both members and observers and identifies several key rules that must be followed, such as rejection of corrupt practices in project implementation and respect for human dignity. If an organization fails to follow these rules, its membership in the platform will be suspended. The observance of the code of conduct is monitored every year through self-evaluating questionnaires available to the organisations.

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[12] Bond Health Check http://www.bond.org.uk/pages/self-assessment-tool.html
[13] Bond Improve It Framework http://www.bond.org.uk/pages/improveit.html
[14] CONCORD Code of Conduct on Images and Messages http://www.deeep.org/images/stories/DARE/CodeofConduct/code%20of%20conduct%20on%20messages%20and%20images.pdf
[15] CONCORD – The European NGO confederation for relief and development http://www.concordeurope.org/
[16] Code on Effectiveness FoRS http://fors.cz/user_files/kodex_efektivnosti_fors.pdf

## 3. Survey methodology

The survey was carried out by the Slovak NGDO Platform with the aim to start up a process that would lead to creation and adoption of a common code on ethics and effectiveness for its members. The information collected from the Platform members and observers, their opinions, attitudes and problems will serve as a basis for gradual preparation of the content and procedures to be contained in such a code.

26 out of 32 members and observers of the NGDO Platform participated in the survey.[17] A semi-structured interview with representatives of particular organisations was used as a primary method in this survey. Those who did not participate in the survey either could not do so due to time constraints and inability to participate in the interview or they currently do not have active projects in the field of development cooperation.

The majority of the participants were directors and leading personnel of the departments responsible for international development cooperation or humanitarian assistance – 9 women and 17 men. Interviews were carried out in person and were recorded. The average length of an interview was 45 minutes. Data collection took place in November and December 2012. Answers given by the interviewees have not been modified in any way and are reproduced authentically as provided by the respondents to demonstrate the great variety of opinions.

## 4. Advances in the area of ethics and effectiveness since last year

In 2011, the NGDO Platform carried out a survey about the implementation of the Istanbul Principles by its members and observers. 19 out of the total 26 respondents of the current survey participated in the 2011 survey. The majority of the interviewees claim they have not noticed significant changes in their activities in relation to the subject of the survey because they had already made significant efforts to implement these principles in the past.

*"We've tried to follow these principles of effectiveness for a long time, so we cannot say we've made a huge stride. Maybe in the area of synergies we try to cooperate more with other organisations to achieve greater complementarity of our activities."*

Respondents who have reported some changes (5 respondents) mentioned they have started to reflect more on their activities, communicate better with their partners and focus more on capacity building of the partner organisations and creation of synergies.

## 5. Need for ethical rules and the shape of the future code of conduct

All respondents who provided an answer to the question regarding the need for ethical rules formulated into a proposed code of conduct agreed that such rules are unequivocally important (25 respondents). Some organisations already have their own codes but they also agree with the idea of having one that would apply to all members and observers of the NGDO Platform, whereby the internal and the common codes of conduct should not contradict each other.

[17] The participants of the survey included the following organisations: Academia Istropolitana Nova, ADRA, C.A.R.D.O., CEEV Živica, Center for European Policy, People in Peril, Two Colour World, eRko, FAIRTRADE Slovakia, Habitat for Humanity, Society Development Institute, Integra Foundation, Milan Šimečka Foundation, Pontis Foundation, NPOA, OESD, OZ Albert, PDCS, People in Need Slovak Republic, RC SFPA, SAVIO, Power of Development, Caritas Slovakia, Slovak Centre for Communication and Development, Red Cross Slovakia, UNICEF Slovakia.

*"Our organisation has its own code of conduct but I suppose it is likely to be very similar to the code proposed by the Platform; they would not exclude each other. It wouldn't be an issue for us to sign such a code."*

Only one respondent asked whether such a code had any meaning.

*"I'd need to know what the reason is for us to be discussing a creation of some code of conduct; whether there have been some incidents or cases that have necessitated such a discussion. (…) I'm not yet entirely convinced that we need such a code."*

The greatest concern present among the different respondents was related to the possible time and financial burden the code would bring to its future signatories.

*"I don't think organisations should be given additional duties to demonstrate their compliance with the code's indicators. It would seem to impose a rather heavy burden, particularly in terms of time."*

*"If organisations were to be punished for not submitting reports about their activities and how they're integrating the code of conduct into them, the Platform would probably lose a lot of its members."*

Some respondents expressed the view that the code of conduct should not substitute for something already in use, for instance, in relation to corruption.

*"To me, this seems superfluous. This code of conduct should deal with things which are not dealt with by law. Things related to morality."*

*"The Slovak Republic has its laws and judiciary bodies to turn to in case of discovering corruption practices."*

Most of the respondents inclined to the idea of a simple code of conduct which would not be restrictive but, rather, a list of basic principles. The possibility of creating a "manual" to the code containing specific examples and situations was positively welcomed. Some respondents argued such a manual would fulfil an important learning function of the code, allowing organisations to move forward. However, opinions on this differed:

*"We are people, who need a whip to make sure we move forward."*

*"Organisations are sufficiently mature not to need a whip. Such a whip to discipline the work of NGOs is demoralising."*

The representatives of the different organisations **clearly differed in their views on whether the code should be binding or have a purely advisory character**. A tight majority of them preferred the option of a code as a set of recommendations, acting as a sort of moral standard.

*"The code should be advisory in nature. The member group of the Platform is well integrated and based on mutual trust."*

Others believe that if the code is not binding and enforceable, it will become useless.

*"Its future shape is connected with the status of the Platform – if the Platform is to be an elite club of organisations, it is necessary [for the code] to be enforceable."*

*"If we let this be based on the voluntary principle, we won't get anywhere. The code will be, so to speak, toothless."*

Some organisations were willing to consider a sanction-based control mechanism as part of the code. Suspension of membership as a sanction for disobeying the code was mentioned most frequently, though there was also a suggestion to implement financial sanctions. The respondents agreed, however, that the sanction process must be divided into steps, starting with warning notes and including an opportunity for rectification. Organisations should be given the room to explain their mistakes and there should be a clear difference between a conscious breach of the code and breach out of ignorance or negligence.

Some level of scepticism was present with regard to the question of evaluation. In virtually all interviews, the representatives of different organisations expressed their doubts about the possibility to monitor the code implementation. Although the majority leaned toward self-monitoring and assessment, they doubted its objectivity. On the other hand, the option of regularly filling out a simple questionnaire which would not require much time or administrative work was welcomed by some as an interesting idea for discussion and reflection within the organisation.

*"If it's based on trust, there's less misuse of resources than in the case of overly structured control mechanisms."*

*"The code of conduct would at least ensure that organisations engage in internal dialogue."*

Nine respondents were of the opinion that **some kind of a control body should be set up**. Among the suggestions it was mentioned that the executive board of the Platform or a group of representatives of member organisations could assume the task of monitoring and control. A suggestion was also made to establish a system through which various actors

majority agrees it would be good to have this point in the form of a recommendation rather than a rule. In other words, it should be defined in general terms and without sanctions.

*"For me, this one is impalpable. We deal with the environment but I wouldn't dare to construct 5 indicators. I think this is a major challenge."*

*"I think this should be one of the goals of every organisation."*

*"This is a cross-cutting theme which we should regard in all our activities, also those in Slovakia – reduce the use of paper, save our resources. We should do similarly in developing countries even though it is more difficult given that it would involve a change of people's perceptions and attitudes. It's a longer journey but these principles are already included in all our projects."*

*"In my view, the environment and climate change play an instrumental role. It's not just about protecting the environment for its own sake but protecting it in order not to destroy ourselves."*

The issue of climate change, some respondents stated that we might have a very radical approach which, however, at the end of the day might be completely unrealistic given that we cannot influence global developments and can only appeal for a solution to the consequences of climate change.

*"Perhaps there should always be a view- from a short- and long-term perspective- about the extent to which we contribute to creating further problems related to climate change, increase in average temperature, etc. We would do better to look for a proportionate and sensitive approach. The code of conduct should mention that organisations should analyze to what extent they contribute to creating problems related to the environment."*

For this reason, one respondent recommended *"extending this principle to include sustainable development, especially sustainability at the community level, sustainability of traditional links in the communities, maybe also in the search for local leaders."*

With regard to the issue of global responsibility, a comment was made that we should not talk about global responsibility but, rather, local responsibility, so that the "global" is not an obstacle on the local level.

*"In some cases, global schemes are binding to such an extent that they might even pose an obstacle to a reasonable project on the local level."*

## 7.3. Transparency, responsibility to donors and recipients (IP no. 5)

The meaning of this principle was perceived to be the most unequivocal and most of the respondents had a clear idea of what it contains. Vast majority of them described it as absolutely crucial. Even opponents of strict rules and sanctions acknowledged the possibility of introducing them in relation to this principle.

*"If an NGO isn't capable of observing the fundamental rule for the work of NGOs, I wouldn't even trust them. Transparency is a fundamental requirement in the third sector. Precisely the organisations that are part of the Platform and committed to the ideas of international development should be at the forefront of promoting transparency and effectiveness."*

*"It's only when we're able to show what we've done with the money that we're able to apply for more."*

Most often, transparency was connected to regular publication of annual reports, basic information on activities, audits, transparent use of resources, publication of information on the internet, etc. At the same time, however, the respondents repeatedly raised the need for a specific definition, for instance, of what these principles really demand, what specific basic information is supposed to be published and in how much detail.

An idea was voiced *"to create some kind of a contact point at the Platform or in specific organisations to which anyone could turn to look for information on how and where funds were used."*

The respondents think it is important to define specific transparency-related control mechanisms, *"even though, in some cases, it is difficult to control some things, like corruption."*

*"We have to discuss the existence of some kind of control. We simply can't do without one."*

*"[For example], setting up rules for a transparent publication of project information and funds on websites and in annual reports."*

*"At least we should set up something on how information should be published on the organisations' websites; so that there's a unified way of doing it and we avoid a situation in which signatories of the code don't have mechanisms in place to check from the information on their website whether they are complying with the rules or not. Every organisation that adopts the code of conduct should also pledge to do its utmost to make sure that the information is easily accessible."*

*"Some organisations are lazy to publish documents they're not obliged to."*

*"Based on the contracts we have with our donors we're obliged and required to provide evidence for how we spend the money, for example, from SlovakAid. The code of conduct should include something that would ensure individual donors an easy access to information on how their money was used – it's, after all, their right."*

One civic association commented: *"We're a civic association that's not obliged to submit annual reports and we can't imagine where we'd find time for that – this isn't suitable for us."*

Signing the principle of transparency is perceived by the majority of the respondents as particularly important in relation to the donors and the public.

**The answer to the question: "What should organisations avoid at all costs?" was unequivocal – corruption.** All of the respondents categorically rejected corruption, primarily in Slovakia where it should never take place; but some remarked that avoiding corruption on the ground in developing countries might be more difficult, especially if there is pressure to follow the project time schedule. In some cases, corruption might even be part of adjusting to the local culture.

The following examples were mentioned:
*"The question is how to avoid corruption in Africa given that it's so common. And provided that we want to stick to the time schedule and if the given person plays a key part in the project – it's a tough decision whether to give them a bribe or not."*

*"Corruption? Yes, it's a problem but there are other rules and regulations on the ground: if the bridge belongs to the rebels you have to pay to cross."*

*"We can see this in our projects when a key person in the project demands a high salary or a fee for facilitating something important. Sometimes you don't have a choice if you don't have anyone else to do the role and you give in. We encounter this all the time; for example, when we were buying some land in (…) or registering the organisation in one of the African countries."*

*"Sometimes you don't even know whether it's corruption or not. We work in (…) and deliver material from (…). Part of this are the so called "road blocks" – a piece of string across the road indicating you must stop, and a guy with a semi-automatic. Usually if we use a personal vehicle, they let us through but if we take the truck, they ask for something. But you don't even know if it's an official check or if it's just someone who wants some money in his pocket. These kinds of things should be differentiated and defined."*

*"Unfortunately, there's corruption in recipient countries. I've often chosen to go against it and, of course, everything was prolonged by three months. This might be something other organisations aren't willing to face or sometimes don't even have the option to. We should definitely not be supportive of corruption and should fight against corruption and manipulation; but, honestly, I don't know how this should be formulated… It often comes with the person – if you don't think it's good, you simply won't do it."*

Three respondents argued for the inclusion of a principle that an organisation should not be financed from sources or corporations that disrespect human rights or do not abide by them.

*"The code should be principle-based in nature. It should contain rules we should never breach – behaviours that make an organisation untrustworthy as well as association with untrustworthy people and groups."*

*"It's not only in development projects that we should be asking what the purpose of the project was and what it was for. Yes, [we should] monitor effectiveness, but in complete agreement with the fact that purpose plays the dominant role."*

## 7.4. Equitable partnerships, mutual learning, sharing of know-how, participation of all actors in development (IP no. 6 and 7)

Based on the respondents' answers, it is the aim of each of the organisations to establish partnerships based on mutual respect and integrity. They also try to share the entire project documentation with their partners. As to the issue of sharing know-how, however, the opinions differed:
*"I don't know if this should be made a requirement. Certainly, some might object that they have their know-how and no-one can force them to share it. This should definitely not be made into a "hard" indicator. In this area, I'd rather put something in about looking for synergies. It should be about mutual benefit rather than obligation."*

*"There's the well-known competition and fight for funding. I can't imagine sharing know-how in Slovakia."*

*"If you imagine organisation X that applies for a grant together with organisation Y and it's given to organisation Y for the same region, it's entirely clear that organisation X will not give you the know-how. If you get it in that they must share it, I'll sign it."*

For some respondents, these principles were linked with competition. Reactions to this phenomenon varied:

*"It should be a part of the code that there shouldn't be competition among organisations. They should be willing to cooperate. This should be supported by discussion: if someone applies for a project in an area where they haven't worked before, it should be considered whether someone is already active there and if so, connection should be established with that organisation instead of the two going against each other."*

*"Organisations don't cooperate with each other even though they are members of the same Platform. We only manage to cooperate with […] which is linked to the fact we share the same values. I'm a strong advocate of cooperation among organisations and, therefore, I think it should be part of the code of conduct. I even think it should be a duty of the Platform members. It's to do with the fact that there shouldn't be competition where the idea is to help. Organisations should not compete against each other but should help each other instead."*

*"There are things that are possible to share and, of course, there are specifics which, I believe, not every organisation would reveal. Here in Slovakia, there's a palpable sense of competition which is perhaps a shame because it would perhaps be better if our strengths and resources could join."*

The majority perceived this principle as a recommendation that should not have a binding character and organisations disobeying it should not be suspended.

*"I consider these principles to belong to the realm of good manners."*

Organisations find it appropriate to help each other on the ground even though they still compete against each other in applying for the same funding. Largely, they cannot concretely imagine how they would share their know-how with other Slovak organisations. Yet, in principle, they would not have such a problem with it.

*"We don't have a problem to share all the information we have and also the resources with partners… That cooperation is a lot better and so are the results."*

*"Maybe there should be a specific principle about engaging and putting a greater emphasis on the local partners' know-how; a movement from transferring know-how from the North to the South. It should be about knowledge sharing that would challenge the paternalistic attitude of "we have the know-how which we transfer to others and we are the ones who move countries towards civilisation". Basically, it's all related to the dignity of the human person and I think it's important to link one of these principles with the code of conduct on images. It's important to recognise the potential also in this case and not to go into development cooperation from a position of superiority."*

## 7.5. Sustainability of results, responsibility for the impact of activities (IP no. 8)

Responsibility for results was perceived as a self-evident principle, but sustainability was seen by the respondents as more complicated and more difficult to measure.

*"It's probably the most important principle. When we go into a given country it's because we want to do something there. [And not that we] leave after 12 months... and it's all over and done with."*

*"We should all take the responsibility for the results of our work. Sustainability is perhaps more difficult, but I think it's possible to speak about it in the short term. In my view, if everyone takes up their own responsibility in the society, then it's about sustainability."*

This principle resonated with the respondents also in relation to funding issues, whereby the different NGDOs engaged in a discussion about the question: who will ensure that the project continues? Many still shift the responsibility for sustainability onto the donor and do not want to accept it as their own.

*"We try to maintain the results but if we don't have funding from donors we, as a non-profit, can't do anything. Nonetheless, we commit ourselves to this already in our projects, so we don't have to double the commitment."*

*"From my perspective, this is an unenforceable principle. The majority of the things are related to grants and don't have a chance to earn money for themselves. For example, we carry out education of teachers but if, after two years, we don't have the grant anymore, it's not possible for us to sustain this. We don't have the money for food, lodging. This is why I wouldn't sign it. I couldn't commit to the project's sustainability because the majority of development assistance is based on grants; it's not based on building up a self-sustaining project. Those ones are very few."*

The extent to which NGDOs might be able to grasp this in the future code of conduct is questionable despite the fact they have to comment on this in every project evaluation. **The majority agreed that the principle could be adopted to the same extent it is adopted in the Czech code.**[18] Yet, they recommended avoiding too strict definitions of these principles and the imposition of sanctions. In general, this principle is perceived as a positive initiative but it is crucial to engage in a discussion on it.

*"This principle should definitely be contained in the code of conduct. Because if we improve someone's quality of life in the short term and then leave them alone, we can cause more harm than good. For instance, if someone is used to having 1 dollar a day and you come and increase it to 4 and they change their way of getting food etc., and you leave and they stay in this new set-up, they can't find their way around anymore; they can feel traumatised. So, it's important to include this in the code."*

## 8. Conclusions and recommendations for the Slovak NGDO Platform

**Findings:**
– The majority of the Platform members and observers agreed there is a need for a common code on ethics and effectiveness.
– The NGDOs perceive a need for an expert as well as a wider public discussion on the topics of ethics and effectiveness of development work.

**Recommendation 1**: To start a public discussion among professionals as well as the lay public on particular topics related to the IP. This discussion has to become part of the process of the code creation.

[18] "Members and observers of FoRS are responsible for positive and negative, planned and unplanned impact of their development interventions and other activities on the situation of target groups and other development actors. They accept their share of responsibility for sustainability of positive impact and they are interested in the life and attitudes of the target groups even after the end of their projects. They also support sustainability of the development of local communities through helping them limit environmental pollution and support them in preserving bio-diversity."

**Recommendation 2**: To actively work on raising awareness of the Platform's name and informing the wider public about quality standards in development cooperation.

**Findings:**
– The NDGOs share a widespread sense that there is a lack of clear definition of principles and terms related to them.

**Recommendation 3**: As part of the technical discussion, education events aimed to clarify thematic areas in which Slovak actors consider themselves insufficiently informed should continue; for example in relation to the following: human rights-based approach to development, climate change and its impact on poverty, sustainability of results of development interventions, etc.
**Recommendation 4**: A manual should be created alongside the code of conduct, explaining specific principles and procedures.

**Findings:**
– There is no agreement about sanctions and how strict the code should be.
– Some have raised concerns that some rules can bind the organisations and hinder them in their work.

**Recommendation 5**: The process of the code creation should be scheduled to include several steps, beginning with a series of recommendations and gradually moving towards procedures and possible sanctions.

**Findings:**
– Transparency and responsibility are principles that cause the least amount of controversy and almost everyone identifies with them.
– Principles least well understood by the Slovak NGDOs are: sharing know-how, mutual learning and equitable partnerships.

**Recommendation 6**: The code should be based on the principles that generate a consensus. They should gradually be extended by those ones which in Slovakia may be perceived as more controversial and require a longer discussion and technical preparation.

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