Inclusive development is a pro-poor approach that equally values and incorporates the contributions of all stakeholders - including marginalized groups - in addressing development issues. It promotes transparency and accountability, and enhances development cooperation outcomes through collaboration between civil society, governments and private sector actors.

Development fails when governments neglect the needs of the very people it is designed to help. Yet too often, countries undertake development policies and programs in response to donor demands or private sector interests at the cost of citizen involvement, resulting in ineffective and sometimes destructive developmental programs.

Foreign aid works best as a tool in the hands of the right local leaders – those trying to solve their own problems in their own nations and neighborhoods.

On the contrary, development initiatives are more effective for poverty reduction when all stakeholders, especially citizens and marginalized communities, are actively involved in the planning, execution and monitoring of development programs.

Three examples of successful inclusive development initiatives
The following case studies are concrete examples of how far inclusive development can take us. We hope they will inspire our discussions throughout this first High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and encourage us to commit to more substantive actions.

In Brazil, the joint efforts of government and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the formulation of public policies on food security led to major improvements in the living conditions of the deprived.

The Zero Hunger Project was originally conceived by a civil society organization in 2001. It was then adopted by President Lula’s administration in 2003, making a clear statement that the fight against hunger was a political priority. The public policies facilitated the definition of the roles and responsibilities of each sector – including the private sector – guaranteeing their autonomy but at the same time expressing the need to work together.

As a result, 28 million people broke free from the cycle of hunger and many countries were inspired by Brazil’s success story.

The progress made by Brazil in the fight against hunger resulted from the combination of the efforts of government and civil society through a process of collective, participatory and democratic collaboration.
India: Improving health care through community-based monitoring systems

CSOs in India have long pushed for the implementation of community-based monitoring and planning processes as a part of the national standards system. When the National Rural Health Mission was established by the government in 2005, it gave NGOs an official mandate to operate. They brought in an innovative rights-based approach to health services, focusing on transparency, participation and accountability in the delivery of public health services.

This allowed for the start of a new dialogue between service providers and recipients. Communities became more accustomed to participating in decision making, while health delivery staff became accustomed to receiving feedback and being held to account by service-users. The annual average number of deliveries performed per primary health centre doubled in the districts where community-based monitoring and planning was implemented.

Grassroots organizations know the community’s needs and the demand side of health services, enabling them to complement the official top-down approach.

Kenya: Budget decentralization encourages female entrepreneurship

Kenya has a system of devolved budgets, where the use of funds is decided by local committees rather than the central government. Each year, five per cent of national income tax receipts are allocated to the Local Authorities Transfer Fund to improve financial management and accountability.

In Turkana County, communities were trained by NGOs to take part in the management of these budgets, while government officials were trained on citizen participation, good governance and social accountability.

This newly acquired knowledge inspired the Lokabuur women’s group to request training on small business entrepreneurship through the Ministry of Arid Lands, which in turn allowed them to access loans through another ministry. Today most of their members are engaged in small business and able to earn the income necessary to feed their families.

*It is only the power of knowledge that will free this community from poverty.*
- Elizabeth Longoe, community member, Turkana Central district

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Oxfam is a world-wide development organization that mobilizes the power of people against poverty.