

Preparing for the 2014 Development Cooperation Forum
DCF GERMANY HIGH-LEVEL SYMPOSIUM

*Accountable and effective development
cooperation in a post-2015 era*

20-21 March 2014 Berlin, Germany
OFFICIAL SYMPOSIUM SUMMARY

HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ Development cooperation will play an important role in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Shaping a shared language and common understanding of development cooperation post-2015 will be vital to engage all relevant actors and trigger action.
- ❖ The wealth of experience to maximize effectiveness and development impact provides critical lessons for the design and implementation of a post-2015 development agenda. Different actors have supported development successes through a variety of approaches. The quality of development cooperation is therefore a wide field of inquiry and action, though with growing consensus on what constitutes effective cooperation and monitoring of development progress. Further efforts are needed to ensure ODA effectiveness as well as to foster the engagement of all actors to upcoming challenges and provide an enabling environment at local and country level.
- ❖ Global accountability for development cooperation is about building positive pressure for change and providing the right incentives to meet voluntary commitments. The promise of sustainable development results provides the most powerful motivation.
- ❖ No one-size-fits-all approach exists for holding actors accountable. An inclusive, fully recognized and robust global monitoring and accountability framework for development cooperation is needed to accelerate progress at all levels. It should provide a simple differentiated architecture, or overarching umbrella framework, recognizing the diversity of actors and approaches, engaging all actors in a continuous dialogue and enabling them to contribute, thus promoting coherence of policies and actions.
- ❖ Such a global architecture for monitoring and accountability of development cooperation should reflect global commitments yet be people-centred, focus on commitments and sustainable development results and be tailored to local realities to empower actors on the ground. It should enable rights holders and their representatives in parliament and civil society. It needs clear links to existing national and regional mutual accountability mechanisms. This can be achieved through transparent, open communication and an environment of trust to foster mutual learning. This should be coupled with monitoring systems that have built-in feedback loops to enable an evidence based dialogue. In this sense, better availability of usable data and knowledge management in development cooperation are key.
- ❖ Efforts to ensure development cooperation commitments are met will have to be intrinsically linked to a renewed and inter-governmentally agreed global partnership for development, one that is effectively monitored and implemented and to the rules of the game of the global economy.
- ❖ The Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) provides a global platform for discussions on the future of development cooperation post-2015. At its fourth biennial High-level Meeting in New York on 10-11 July 2014, the DCF should bring together findings and messages on development cooperation aspects of a post-2015 development agenda, including from the first High-level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, in Mexico City on 15-16 April 2014.

Development cooperation and a post-2015 development agenda

Development cooperation will play a critical role in implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda. This includes helping to bring together actors from different fields and promoting collective responses to global challenges. Successfully implementing the agenda will require going beyond aid and unlocking additional resources.

A unified and universal global development agenda will have important implications for effectiveness and accountability of development cooperation. Given its focus on aid, mutual accountability for development cooperation has largely taken place between donors and recipient countries. Post-2015, the focus should shift to the impact of development cooperation for the respective communities. This implies an increased focus on the target beneficiaries and the quality of development cooperation provided.

A participatory bottom-up approach is essential to design and implement the development cooperation aspects of a post-2015 development agenda. Effective involvement of stakeholders means ensuring that they can make an input in the policy making and reviews of progress relevant to them.

The United Nations Development Cooperation Forum provides a platform for global discussions on the future of development cooperation post-2015. Dialogue is taking place in several fora on the “how” of the post-2015 development agenda, in the United Nations and beyond. The fourth biennial High-level Meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum, in New York, on 10-11 July 2014, provides a platform for bringing together such findings and messages, including from the first High-level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, in Mexico City on 15-16 April 2014.

Quality and effectiveness of development cooperation post-2015

Experience shows that a growing openness to learning and sharing of knowledge and lessons has increased the impact of development cooperation efforts. In preparing for a transformative post-2015 development agenda, these efforts must be further supported.

Lessons and good practices include...

Shaping a shared language for development cooperation is vital to engage people and inspire action. Sharing knowledge is essential to ground policies and programmes experiences and policy advice in national and local interests and to inform how aid practices to allocate and use aid and other sources of financial and technical cooperation are developed and utilized.

People-centered approaches with local ownership have stronger stakeholder buy-in and are thus more effective. Development cooperation has to originate from people’s needs. It has to be built on mutual respect and equality. This, in turn, helps citizens and governments to own development policies and set clear priorities. A focus on policies that have clear social impact can also help justify international cooperation to tax payers in provider countries. It can contribute to effective accountability, both within a country and between provider and recipient countries.

Strengthening the capacity of national and local implementing agents to deliver meaningful and accessible services needs greater attention. Providing more financial support “on budget,” by linking donor funds with national budget processes, or by pooling donor funds to support government priorities, can also lead to greater flexibility and national ownership, as well as more coherent policies.

Unfinished aid effectiveness business and related challenges need integrated solutions.

This includes promoting results orientation; further reducing parallel implementation units; coordination and sharing of burden; getting the scope of international technical assistance right; untying aid; and producing forward-spending plans. Such plans can help to ensure effective budgeting.

Monitoring progress publicly will incentivize change. There is a growing body of evidence that effective monitoring of development cooperation with participation of all actors and the actual impact of development cooperation are interrelated. Greater evidence on progress can incentivize action and help to dispel concerns that practices or conditionalities are being imposed from outside.

Financial support is needed to enable different actors to engage early on in development operations, and to ensure that projects are aligned with existing national efforts to monitor the use of external financing.

One specific suggestion is to support civil society organizations in their efforts to put their own process in place to monitor CSO principles for effectiveness, as an integral part of global accountability for development cooperation. This can contribute to efforts by parliaments in strengthening monitoring and accountability of development cooperation.

Capacity development is the key to put structures in place to produce more basic data and to make better use of existing data; this calls for a “data revolution” in its own right.

Significant shortfalls remain in countries’ ability to produce even the most basic economic and social data, while large bodies of existing data remain untapped and the focus on results in methodologies needs to be strengthened. Globally, data needs to be consolidated and organized, whereas locally, people might already have the technologies needed in place, but not the relevant knowledge. Collecting qualitative data that measures impact on the ground and synchronizing data with fiscal cycles remain a challenge.

Global monitoring and accountability for development cooperation post-2015

Global accountability is about pressure and incentives to meet voluntary commitments, with the promise of sustainable development results as the most powerful incentive.

Accountability needs to be anchored in an institutional framework that creates incentives, disincentives and rewards based on how actors behave. There is need to develop a common language and inclusive approach to accountability for development cooperation that will truly engage, involve and inspire people around the world to pursue a transformative global development agenda.

Accountability is a means, not an end in itself, for building trust and ensuring development results.

It is multidimensional and multi-stakeholder, flowing in many directions, including accountability to future generations. Accountability processes should induce mutual learning and necessary policy and institutional changes. Many participants therefore referred to the relevance of dynamic management processes.

There is some debate about whether global accountability for development cooperation should take into account all development cooperation toward sustainable development or if, for example, development cooperation focused on climate change and global public goods should be treated differently.

Important lessons can be learnt from existing accountability mechanisms.

The MDGs, the Universal Periodic Review on Human Rights (UPR) and the Montreal Protocol hold helpful

lessons for the design of a post-2015 accountability mechanism. These include the need to ensure that: i) reviews of progress are transparent, open and interactive; ii) an adequate variety of sources of data and information is utilized; and iii) secretariat capacities are sufficiently strengthened to help ensure that monitoring and accountability translates into behavior change. Accountability for development cooperation post-2015 could be linked more closely to the human rights type of accountability mechanisms.

A coherent and inclusive global architecture for monitoring and accountability of development cooperation

An inclusive, fully recognized and robust global monitoring and accountability framework for development cooperation, building on existing accountability efforts at all levels, is key to accelerating progress. The post-2015 development agenda should provide a clear mandate and guidelines for such an overarching framework, supporting the achievement of clear, time-bound and measurable global commitments and actions.

The framework should be consistent with how development cooperation will be encapsulated in a renewed and intergovernmentally agreed inclusive global partnership for development. It will have to be intrinsically linked to a renewed global partnership for development, one that is effectively monitored and implemented, and to the rules of the game of the global economy.

The framework should also incorporate the following key features and functions:

... be focused on commitments and results, and enable rights holders and their representatives in parliament and civil society to engage directly, without worry of repercussions. An enabling, democratic environment with an effective legal framework for citizen engagement and reporting back to citizens on the use of external financing and support is the most critical pre-requisite for global accountability for development cooperation. Parliamentarians are essential to provide checks and balances and to ensure engagement of citizens and scrutiny of the private sector. The existing global network of supreme audit institutions could be activated to support the monitoring of effective development financing. National ombudsmen and human rights institutions can also contribute, especially by identifying accountability and transparency gaps, and amplifying the voices of the marginalized and future generations.

... adopt a participatory, bottom-up approach to facilitate meaningful broad engagement and ensure a broad evidence base. It is important to engage actors at stages of policy shaping directly relevant to them and work towards a common goal based on a shared set of values. All countries should be supported in their efforts to strengthen national monitoring and accountability mechanisms, taking into account that appropriate mechanisms will vary with different types of development support provided and utilized.

... fully engage recipient countries and help translate global development cooperation commitments to local contexts, where they can make a difference for the lives of citizens. To ensure country ownership and leadership, national aid management policies and strong data infrastructure should be in place, where needed. All actors should aim to use existing national monitoring systems and further strengthen them.

... engage all actors, instill trust and ownership among them, and foster mutual learning. More clarity is needed on how a global monitoring and accountability framework for development cooperation applies to some of the different actors, in particular the private

sector. Irrespective of their nature, all providers should align their efforts to country priorities and special situations. Peer review elements should be strengthened at all levels.

... gear towards engaging the private sector, beyond Corporate Social Responsibility and the creation and use of codes of conduct. For the private sector to play a meaningful role, it must be better organized and align its binding self-imposed pledges and commitments towards shareholders and the global development agenda. Existing corporate accountability mechanisms, such as the Global Reporting Initiative, need to be strengthened.

... be a multiple accountability framework that promotes coherence and a globally-light set up. It is key to reinforce and consolidate the fragmented landscape of accountability mechanisms at all levels, to ensure meaningful information exchange and address existing gaps. Defining clear organizational relationships of existing mechanisms would help to realize a light global architecture and delegating greater authority to donor representatives on the ground in program countries.

... bring together the findings of the existing monitoring and accountability mechanisms for development cooperation at all levels and review their effectiveness. Special attention should be paid to those mechanisms that are being used by practitioners and policy makers, and that promote balance and inclusiveness, for example: certain global and regional peer review mechanisms, national mutual accountability mechanisms with individual provider targets, CSO shadow reports, and performance tracking and report card systems for citizens. Independent evaluations of accountability mechanisms for development cooperation at all levels and a global exchange on the results should be fully supported, to assess their impact and contribution to the effectiveness of overall support for implementation of a post-2015 development agenda, with poverty eradication and sustainable development at the core.

... ensure high-level political buy-in and technical soundness, and the ability to track information flows – bottom-up, top-down and horizontally. Good practices of different accountability mechanisms that effectively engage decision makers from all stakeholder groups in a high-level policy debate should be replicated in the context of the overarching global framework for monitoring and accountability of development cooperation.

... facilitate the funding of the translation of raw information on development cooperation into useable accountability tools. There is a growing need to support independent data collection and its translation into knowledge products that can be easily understood and used by the general public. This data should be collected in a disaggregated manner to serve specific groups, e.g. youth and women, supported by adequate ICT tools. Understanding what type of information is needed to hold actors answerable for their commitments and foster mutual learning is crucial to simplify and harmonize existing reporting and accountability structures.