

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

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

Executive Summary of Background Study 2  
**Third Global Accountability Survey on Mutual Accountability**

\*\*\* DRAFT \*\*\* (Version 11 March 2014)  
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<sup>1</sup> This document was prepared by a consultant and does not necessarily reflect the views of the co-organizers of the symposium.



## Executive Summary

### Background and purpose of study

Mutual Accountability (MA), that is, the accountability between the providers and recipients of development cooperation, is deemed an essential principle and framework for the effectiveness of development cooperation. The Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) convened by the United Nations Economic and Social (ECOSOC), commissioned a study on national mutual accountability. The study forms part of a series of background papers commissioned for the DCF in preparation for the High-level Symposium of the Development Cooperation Forum to be held in Berlin in March 2014. The study was based on the Third Global Accountability Survey conducted by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) between 9 December 2013 and 20 January 2014. The study built on the previous study and survey conducted in 2011, with the objective to:

- review progress made in implementing national mutual accountability with participation of all key stakeholders;
- identify how to implement enablers of mutual accountability such as partnership policies, results frameworks and dialogue platforms;
- identify key challenges or barriers to mutual accountability and how these can be addressed; and
- promote inclusive national dialogue and accelerate progress in strengthening Mutual Accountability mechanisms; and
- promote global policy dialogue on Mutual Accountability.

This report is an interim one as some countries were still preparing their responses to the survey at the time of drafting. The analysis is based on the 43 countries that responded until mid March, and will be updated following the Berlin symposium. This will allow for the incorporation of insights from the High-level symposium and the data from the outstanding survey responses. The key findings of the study at this stage are preliminary, and should be treated as such. It would also be premature to present any firm conclusions and recommendations at this stage.

### Key findings to date

- (a) **The available data from the survey suggest that there has been some progress with the implementation of MA and the trajectory is in a positive direction, though at a moderate pace.** MA can be considered to be ‘a work in progress’. The respondents’ assessment on the strength was that MA in their countries was moderate (53 per cent), and 31 per cent reported that MA was strong in their countries. The majority of recipient countries felt that there had been progress in MA since the Paris Declaration of 2005, albeit at a moderate pace for 43 per cent of countries.
- (b) **There were small changes since the previous survey in 2011, notably, the increase in the number of countries reporting that they had national aid policies in place.** This number (46), however, still constituted a small proportion of the 139 countries invited to participate in the survey.

- (c) **Recipient countries have set targets in their national policies, predominantly for recipient governments.** There appears to be an improvement in setting targets for providers since the 2011 survey, though less than half (48 per cent) of recipient countries reported setting targets for individual providers. Assessments of progress against targets were conducted in at least 73 per cent of the recipient countries, but tended to focus on the performance of recipient governments and seldom on the performance of providers of development cooperation. This undermines the notion of ‘mutuality’.
- (d) **Recipient countries were able to identify several important practices that could influence the behaviour of recipient governments and providers to improve the effectiveness of development cooperation.** These practices related to:
- Recipient government ownership and leadership of the development cooperation agenda in their countries demonstrated through active involvement in the development of country assistance strategies of donors.
  - Having sound structures and processes in place to monitor commitments and review progress.
  - Having a dedicated unit within the recipient government to responsible for the overall coordination of development cooperation
  - Making information on development cooperation transparent and accessible to the public.
- (e) **Recipient countries rated the overall impact of national MA processes as moderate and that the extent of behavioural change was slightly greater within recipient governments than among providers.** Some of the positive behavioural changes identified in recipient governments included an increased commitment to transparency and accountability; willingness to take ownership and leadership of development cooperation; improved information and reporting on development cooperation. Better alignment with national development priorities; and commitment to report regularly on their activities in the aid information platform were identified as changes in provider behaviour.
- (f) National MA coordination forums in terms of inclusiveness of key stakeholders showed minor changes in the extent of their participation compared to the 2011 survey. Except for civil society organisations and the private sector, the participation of other groups was limited. **Parliamentarians and local government agencies had limited participation in national MA forums.**

## Implementation challenges

The study identified a number of implementation challenges for MA in recipient countries.

- (a) **Setting targets for providers and holding them accountable remains a challenge for several countries.** Related to this was the challenge of securing greater predictability of aid

flows. Countries highly-dependent on aid, fragile or post-conflict states expressed difficulty in holding providers accountable.

- (b) **Many countries lacked gender-specific targets in their policies**, and also did not track gender-disaggregated information on expenditures and results.
- (c) **Insufficient investment in developing capacity for MA at the level of local government.** This has implications for those recipient countries that use local governments as implementing agents.
- (d) **Parliaments played a minimal role in MA in a number of countries.** They were seldom consulted on national aid policies; they seldom provided analytical inputs to recipient governments on development cooperation; they had relatively low usage of development cooperation information; and they received limited capacity development support. This has implications for parliament's oversight role.
- (e) **Several recipient countries reported that non-traditional providers do not participate in MA coordination forums.** Although various discussions welcomed Southern partners as part of a more inclusive development there is no clarity on whether non-traditional providers form part of the MA framework and how they are to be incorporated into national MA activities.

### Emerging issues for the post-2015 agenda

The High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 development agenda called for forging a new global partnership for development as the most important transformative shifts required for the post-2015 agenda, with a new spirit of solidarity, cooperation and mutual accountability underpinning the post-2015 agenda. The findings of this study on national MA propose the following emerging issues for the post-2015 agenda:

- (a) The development cooperation and development assistance landscape has been changing, and has become increasingly complex with a diversity of providers and stakeholders. The question is whether the existing MA frameworks are appropriate mechanisms for fostering mutually-beneficial and mutually-accountable relationships.
- (b) Gender equality and women's empowerment will remain a priority for the post-2015 agenda. An issue that emerges is why gender continues to be almost invisible in MA implementation and how this challenge can be addressed going forward.
- (c) The High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 development agenda called for inclusivity of the new global partnership for development that included for example, people living in poverty, traditionally marginalised groups, local communities, local government, the business community, academia and private philanthropy. One of the implementation challenges for national MA is how to make MA structures and processes more inclusive of those who have had limited involvement to date. This includes the need for greater involvement of parliaments in the oversight of development cooperation at national level.
- (d) MA frameworks to date have emphasised the global level and the national level and very little has been said about the role and contribution of regional institutions to MA. Regional economic communities and regional institutions such as the African Union will undoubtedly

play a critical role in the post-2015 development agenda. The question is how regional institutions can be leveraged to reinforce MA at the national level and at the global level.

MA in the post-2015 era will require timely, accurate and useful information in development cooperation, that is accessible not only to key stakeholders, but also to the broader public. An emerging issue is how existing aid management information systems should be adapted to monitor and report on progress with MA in the post-2015 era