



UNDESA SUPPORT TO NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS “MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR MORE EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION”

Background

Facing the challenges of sustainable development, developing countries need to secure access to external financing and improve their ability to absorb such flows in an effective and coherent manner, aligned to their national development agendas.

This requires governments, and the full range of partners, to be accountable for commitments and results in development cooperation. This will become only more critical to ensure successful implementation of a post-2015 development agenda.

Several factors are heightening the importance for developing countries of ensuring long-term financing for development. The composition of external financing flows and development cooperation partners are changing, leading to a much more diverse development landscape. A global development agenda is emerging that is both universal, in its application to all countries, and unified, in its focus on poverty eradication and sustainable development. And pressure persists from traditional donors to justify international cooperation for development through real impact and lasting results.

Mutual accountability: What goal does it serve?

There is growing consensus that strong “mutual accountability” will have a lasting impact on the behaviour of both partners and recipient governments. It improves the quality and impact of development cooperation by bringing all partners around the table on an equal footing to instil trust and learning. It can help to balance the onus of monitoring and reporting, which is often placed on developing countries, with their already stretched capacities in aid management and coordination.

The main objective of “mutual accountability” is to address this asymmetry. It promotes effective partnerships, based on recognition of national leadership that ensures effectiveness and poverty reduction impact.¹ It should also encourage stakeholders to change behaviour towards achieving more sustainable development results, with long-lasting

impact, by delivering on specific commitments related to development cooperation.

To address rapid changes in the composition of partners and implications of a post-2015 development agenda on development cooperation, mutual accountability mechanisms will need to better capture the diverse range of stakeholders and commitments.

So far, in addition to quantitative commitments on ODA and other flows, commitments by traditional donors include: to record flows on the national budget; untie them; use more cost-effective modalities, coordinate practices with other providers; reduce conditionalities, where feasible, and parallel implementation units; and provide reliable indicative commitments over a multi-year period, leading to more timely disbursement.

The ability of programme countries to proof their efforts in maximizing their cost-effectiveness, particularly by using effective national procurement, financial management and implementation systems, has been mixed, with some good examples available for peer learning.

To promote domestic accountability, they are also expected to enable parliaments, to oversee the use of flows, and civil society, to engage in development planning and performance assessment.

Objectives of project

This capacity development project will respond to specific government demands in up to four Sub-Saharan African developing countries to support their ongoing efforts to improve the effective use of external financing for sustainable development, deployed in areas where needed and fully absorbed. It will help identify and address capacity limitations in designing, implementing, operationalizing or improving national “mutual accountability” frameworks, in an effort to promote trust and partnerships around a shared agenda. The success of the project will hinge upon its ability to demonstrate immediate progress in advancing on mutually agreed development cooperation commitments in each country.

¹ The Monterrey Consensus in 2002 first established mutual accountability as a truly global commitment to enhance the effectiveness of international development cooperation.

The project will support efforts to advance the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development at national level,

The main focus of the project will be to support government officials responsible for managing external development financing, representatives of partners, parliament and civil society organizations in advancing specific “enablers” for mutual accountability (such as aid policies, performance assessment frameworks and policy dialogue structures).

Resources will be available to: advance a common understanding among stakeholders of the role of effective monitoring and accountability and to improve their capacity to design and implement key accountability “enablers”. Major entry points are the existing donor-government coordination platforms and existing compacts/documents outlining government priorities and commitments.

The project will help to facilitate targeted interventions, ranging from training workshops, scoping studies, interactive government-donor exchanges, awareness raising and knowledge sharing activities, including with other developing countries, among others.

Under government leadership and in close partnership with UNDP and other stakeholders, the project will: greater capacity to monitor the use of development financing; the ability of the government, in consultation with national stakeholders, to formulate concise demands vis-à-vis its donor community, such as those related to the delivery of development cooperation in a timely and predictable manner, and without unnecessary conditionalities; and to attract further investment directed towards monitoring and accountability. The project is also expected to generate clear action points for immediate follow up, with view to encouraging national stakeholders to take on greater ownership in implementing next steps.

The methodology for implementing the project will be adapted to the needs of the main actors in each country. A multi-stakeholder, informal task force, under government leadership, will provide substantive guidance and support implementation. It is expected to provide strategic advice on priority actions and support to ensure coordination and synergies with existing mechanisms and efforts.

The project is designed to provide initial support up until June 2014. It is one objective of the project

to draw attention of government partners to key gaps and bottlenecks in need of further investment. The task force can support such efforts beyond the project cycle.

Key findings from the project will inform an authoritative report on global accountability, to be published by UNDESA.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES *(to be adapted and sequenced according to country needs)*

1. Preparation of a **scoping study** to identify: (i) key challenges in ensuring effective use and absorption of external financing flows; (ii) status of the national mutual accountability framework; (iii) priorities in enhancing MA enablers (such as preparing, finalizing or supporting endorsement of aid/partnership policy, revisiting indicators for PAFs, ensuring engagement of different actors etc.);
2. Support facilitation of **brainstorming sessions and workshops**, engaging relevant practitioners and policy makers at national and local level, with participation of senior government officials to identify concrete next steps and areas of investment;
3. Prepare a **country report** with findings and policy recommendations, serving multiple purposes, including analytical work, awareness raising/outreach, CD and peer learning;
4. Support the mapping of activities needed to implement policy recommendations; Facilitate **public information campaigns**, including through expert platforms, traditional and social media, and the design and use of **training materials and tool kits**;
5. Convey findings at global level, through preparations for the 2014 United Nations Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), and other platforms, such as the African Platform for Development Effectiveness (APDev), and the Busan global partnership for effective development cooperation;
6. Support efforts to secure additional support to implement follow-up action;

Government leadership

Activities will be funded by the Development Account, a capacity development programme by UN-DESA aimed at enhancing capacities of developing countries in the priority areas of the UN development agenda.. Participating countries are expected to contribute in-kind by: i) engaging a senior level government officials in the task group and supporting project implementation; ii) providing substantive inputs and strategic advice in crafting background documentation, policy recommendations and final report; iii) supporting awareness raising and engagement of national stakeholders and knowledge sharing.

For further information on the project, please contact:

DCF Secretariat

Development Cooperation Policy Branch
Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination,
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs,
UN Secretariat Building, 25th floor, New York, NY 10017

Email: lombardoc@un.org, cc: boehler@un.org.

Website: www.un.org/ecosoc/DCF