

**2020 DCF Survey Study: Toward effective development cooperation  
in the COVID-19 period  
Summary of Virtual Launch and Webinar  
10 July 2020**

The virtual launch of the DCF Survey Study welcomed all stakeholders, including survey participants, experts and civil society representatives, to begin engaging on key findings of the latest DCF Survey. Against a complex and dynamic global backdrop, many countries increasingly see the enablers<sup>1</sup> of development cooperation as a set of tools that can be employed to keep national development priorities at the heart of their development cooperation policies and practices.

Unforeseen development challenges like COVID-19 highlight the centrality of strengthened national capacities and country systems to reducing risk and building the resilience of developing countries. With the DCF as an inclusive global platform, frank dialogue driven by the biennial Survey analysis can sharpen understanding and facilitate the necessary policy and behavior changes for more effective development cooperation in the COVID-19 period and beyond.

National development cooperation policy	Country results framework	Development cooperation information system	National development cooperation forum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision</li> <li>• Priorities</li> <li>• Targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring targets</li> <li>• Long-term impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate, comprehensive, quality and timely data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-stakeholder dialogue</li> <li>• Review progress against targets</li> </ul>
<b>Capacity support</b>			

**“Enablers” of development cooperation in practice – country and stakeholder experiences**

In concrete terms, countries and other stakeholders described how the increasingly diverse and context-specific design and implementation of the enablers are improving national capacities, making progress on national sustainable development strategies, and responding to the early impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Ms. Angela Bester, lead author** of the [2020 DCF Survey Study](#) began the launch by presenting the key findings of the publication. Discussions were moderated by **Mr. Navid Hanif, Director, Financing for Sustainable Development Office, UN DESA**.

**Mrs. Gladys Mamtee Osabutey, Chief Economic Officer, Head of UN System Unit, Ministry of Finance, Ghana**, said that the country’s national development cooperation policy (NDCP) had helped to mitigate risks by serving as a common reference point for the country and its diverse partners in response to COVID-19.

Ghana’s NDCP – which also includes a partnership agreement – helped facilitate close collaboration with partners to reallocate technical assistance and financing for personal protective equipment and safe and sanitary public schooling, among other urgent priorities. The NDCP has also helped to ensure a good division of labour among partners by encouraging a focus on comparative advantages; in the case of the multilateral system, it improved coordination on the ground (e.g. within the UNCT, and through the support of the Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility).

Ghana does not have a stand-alone country result framework (CRF). Rather, it tracks results under the

<sup>1</sup> As outlined in the DCF Survey, the key enablers include (i) national development cooperation policies (NDCPs), (ii) country results frameworks (CRFs), (iii) development cooperation information systems (DCIS), (iv) national development cooperation forums (NDCF) and (v) capacity support, which is cross-cutting.

National Development Planning Commission, which is being used to monitor the COVID-19 response. Mrs. Osabutey noted the challenges between balancing short-term needs and immediate responses to the pandemic with the longer-term planning and resilience building. As a pilot country for integrated national financing frameworks (INFFs), Ghana was exploring how an INFF could draw on existing national policy and financing architectures, including the enablers of development cooperation.

**Mr. Carlos Pol, Director, Ministry of Economic Development and Petroleum, Belize**, outlined that, while Belize does not have a stand-alone NDCP, the country has articulated a strong national vision in its long-term framework, medium-term strategy and public sector investment programme. Mr. Pol highlighted the contributions that a clear, comprehensive NDCP could make to achieving the national sustainable development objectives and called for further knowledge sharing on how to develop a standalone NDCP. This could be especially useful in scaling up development cooperation for building disaster and climate resilience, which are central to the country's medium-term plan, and strengthening the necessary national capacities.

With respect to CRFs, Mr. Pol described Belize's use of a monitoring and evaluation framework that it adapted from the UN to monitor its progress in the short and medium terms. Mr. Pol described how Belize's development cooperation information system (DCIS) is closely linked to its public sector investment programme, incorporating data and information on domestic and international sources of finance. The DCIS has clearly demonstrated its benefits, as various users – both within Government but also among external partners – have come to rely on it in identifying potential projects. Belize is partnering with CARICOM to strengthen its statistical system as part of this work, to support better planning and execution of projects.

**Mr. Md. Rezaul Bashar Siddique, Joint Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh**, reported that the country's current NDCP is pending approval, with the serious challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic leading to potential revisions.

There has been an increased use of the CRF, as contained in Bangladesh's five-year national development plan. Nevertheless, target-setting remains a challenge for the CRF, which is due in part to the diversity of development cooperation actors and their varied approaches and priorities. Bangladesh plans to address these challenges by introducing a more refined CRF in its next five-year plan.

The National Development Cooperation Forum (NDCF) is held at a high level every two years. Attendance at the forum by the Prime Minister and other senior-level representatives incentivizes strong stakeholder participation.

Bangladesh is preparing for LDC graduation in 2024 and, coupled with the challenges posed by COVID-19, this will make effective development cooperation more important than ever. Going forward, stronger collective action should be guided by core principles of the 2030 Agenda: inclusiveness, solidarity and partnership.

**Ms. Petra Bayr, Member of Parliament and Chair of Sub-committee for Development Cooperation, Austria**, likened COVID-19 to a magnifying glass that made existing inequalities within and among countries more visible. Parliaments have a role to play in response and recovery efforts -- to raise awareness and forge solidarity; provide necessary budgets for effective development cooperation; and promote the role of high-quality public goods as the right of people everywhere.

Greater awareness of longstanding development imbalances in the current context provides an opportunity for more effective development cooperation, focused on strengthening of capacities and resilience. For example, rather than providing quick fixes, cooperation in the health sector should be oriented more towards building health systems, achieving universal health coverage and making the intellectual property rights regimes better fit for purpose in the midst of a global pandemic.

**Mr. Luca de Fraia, Deputy Director, Action Aid Italy**, underlined the various contributions civil society organizations could make toward more effective development cooperation in the COVID-19 period – as campaigners to hold donors accountable to their commitments; as implementers driven by strong, resilient relationships forged over time; and as a watchdog in the midst of a multitude of announcements (new or based on

existing commitments) in support of response and recovery efforts.

While understandable for public health reasons, pandemic-driven social distancing measures have raised questions about shrinking civic space that merit discussion. The survey study underlined the fundamental importance of NDCPs and NDCFs as vehicles for engaging civil society and enabling their contributions to more effective development cooperation within countries. Mr. de Fraia welcomed stronger collaboration with all stakeholders to advance continuous improvement in the quality and relevance of these enablers.

In her video message, **Ms. Hege Røttingen, Deputy Director, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Section for Partnerships, Governance and Development Financing**, highlighted that the Survey Study and discussion were critical to learning and improving preparedness for future crises. As a committed development cooperation partner, Norway is doing its part to ensure that those with the least are included in effective response and recovery from the pandemic.

Norway is building on existing channels, national institutions and country-level efforts and coordination, where possible. It is prioritizing a range of initiatives including the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness, increased support to the WHO and UN humanitarian response, the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, the debt moratorium and the FACTI Panel. Ms. Røttingen underscored that efforts toward recovery should be guided by the SDGs.

### **Interactive discussion**

The interactive discussion drew incisive questions from participants. During discussions on what prevented countries from developing a standalone NDCP, **Mr. Pol** noted that the technical evidence for the benefits of an NDCP was not always met with the political will for a country to develop one. It could be a challenge to have executive or parliaments at the highest level understand the benefits of having such a policy. Furthermore, given how young the country is, moving toward a long-term planning approach would take time.

Another question was raised on whether there was need to discuss quality standards of CRFs. **Mr. Siddique** reiterated the importance of consulting all development partners and stakeholders to improve the quality of CRFs. However, he also emphasized, as an essential ingredient, demand for the use of CRFs from the government, domestic stakeholders and international partners, with real links to budget and planning processes. Similarly, while NDCPs can exist, stakeholders can resist being bound by policy frameworks/terms of the engagement and following established guidance. More needs to be done to improve the awareness among stakeholders of the shared value of NDCPs in guiding effective development cooperation.

On engaging a variety of stakeholders in development cooperation policies and practices, **Mrs. Osabutey** noted that governments have a leading role to play in achieving sustainable development, in partnership with stakeholders. **Ms. Bayr** underscored that the public sector should take primary responsibility for delivering public goods (e.g. health care, water etc.). **Mr. De Fraia** highlighted that civil society plays an important role in ensuring there is accountability in decision-making by governments and international development cooperation partners, with NDCFs as an important platform for strengthening transparency and accountability.

In her concluding reflections, **Ms. Bester** underscored the integral role of the enablers in aligning development cooperation with national priorities and steering the initial COVID-19 response toward immediate needs within countries; further efforts should focus on how development cooperation is addressing deepening inequalities and supporting resilience. Prior to the crisis, the enablers were demonstrating their value in practice ways to improving the quality and effectiveness of development cooperation, and the survey study proposes options for strengthening their contribution to the COVID-19 recovery over the long term. A whole-of-society approach is critical, recognizing the agency of people in their own development.

**Mr. Hanif** signaled that a series of webinars would be organized by the DCF in the lead-up to the 2021 DCF (6-7 May 2021), drawing on the discussion and digging still deeper into the findings of the study and emerging challenges of COVID-19 recovery.