

## *2020 DCF Survey Study: Toward effective development cooperation in the COVID-19 period* Note for Parliaments on key findings and proposals for action

Early response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic are generating lessons for developing countries, international development cooperation partners and other actors to improve the quality and impact of their support to national sustainable development priorities and recover better from the crisis. National experiences demonstrate how development cooperation can build resilience of developing countries to risks, by strengthening their capacities and supporting country systems.

Parliaments play an essential role in guiding action on the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensuring that development cooperation effectively supports efforts at regional and country levels. Their legislative, budgeting and oversight roles can promote improved quantity, quality and impact of development cooperation.

The 2020 DCF Survey Study<sup>1</sup> stresses the need for parliaments to boost their capacities and contributions to effective development cooperation: an essential ingredient for COVID-19 response and recovery. This note sets out the key parliament-related findings from the study, for further discussion and action.

### I. Enablers of international development cooperation

The DCF Survey provides developing countries with space to i) reflect with their partners and stakeholders on the state of each of the five enablers at the national level and ii) follow-up with practical actions to enhance the quality, impact and effectiveness of development cooperation.

<b>Key enablers of international development cooperation</b>			
<b>National development cooperation policy</b>	<b>Country results framework</b>	<b>Development cooperation information system</b>	<b>National development cooperation forum</b>
<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>			

The 2020 Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) Survey Study found that many countries increasingly use the enablers of development cooperation as a set of tools for aligning international development cooperation to their national development priorities. The 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. Multi-stakeholder approaches bolster many of the most successful efforts in deploying the enablers to these ends.

### II. National development cooperation policies (NDCPs)

NDCPs are firmly in place as essential components of the international development cooperation ecosystem. The majority of countries surveyed have adopted or updated their NDCP since 2016. The content of the policies increasingly reflects the diversity of development finance and other means of implementation required by the 2030 and Addis Agendas: these go beyond official development assistance (ODA) to include domestic resource mobilization, private finance, and South-South and triangular cooperation.

<sup>1</sup> The full 2020 survey study can be accessed [online here](#) and additional information on the DCF survey exercise can be [found here](#).

Countries that do not have NDCPs in place are encouraged to do so, as a clear part of national development plans. Moreover, provisions should be made for regular comprehensive reviews of the policy, which allow the taking into account of significant changes in the national, regional or global contexts. NDCPs should also better reflect the challenge of key development risks and their implications for development cooperation. For example, numerous small island developing States have shown how climate and disaster risk reduction can be prioritized within their NDCPs, helping to shape collaboration with international development cooperation partners accordingly.

#### Findings and proposals for parliaments:

- The role of parliaments in development cooperation varies across countries – in some contexts, parliaments are consulted in the design phase of NDCPs, while in others they are not engaged at all.
- A roughly similar proportion of countries surveyed between 2017/2018 and 2019/2020 reported that they had consulted their respective parliaments in the design of their NDCPs (61 and 66 per cent, respectively).
- Parliaments could and should play a stronger role in oversight of NDCPs. Only 39 per cent of countries in the 2019/2020 DCF Survey indicated that parliament reviewed the policy in a public hearing before the policy came into effect. The same percentage reported that their NDCPs required progress reports be submitted to parliament.

### III. Country results frameworks (CRFs)

The results of the DCF Survey Study show improvements in the content of CRFs and their effective use in monitoring development cooperation. More than half of countries surveyed have CRFs in place, and they increasingly reflect targets for local and regional governments compared to previous years, as well as targets for individual development cooperation partners. Most countries report that the monitoring of targets in their CRFs contributed to improved alignment between the activities of external partners and national priorities. Yet, many countries still do not have CRFs. They cite various reasons for this: the use of other development results frameworks in their planning; structural barriers; and limited capacities.

#### Findings and proposals for parliaments:

- The existence of CRFs are an important enabler for parliaments to perform their oversight functions effectively. CRFs can also discourage the use of parallel results frameworks, which can potentially undermine country priorities and potentially challenge oversight efforts. To this end, countries require capacity support to operationalize and strengthen CRFs.

### IV. Development cooperation and information systems (DCIS)

DCIS are in place in most countries, helping to improve the transparency and management of development cooperation. Data quality remains a challenge, with nearly half of the surveyed countries reporting incomplete data from partners. While notable improvements have been made in expanding accessibility of DCIS, regular use by these stakeholders remains low in many instances. Most DCIS currently in place track the ‘basics’ of development cooperation -- projected disbursements, progress on projects, on-budget flows and progress against targets. Few DCIS track progress on untied development cooperation<sup>2</sup>; the contribution of development cooperation to combatting inequalities; and gender-disaggregated expenditures and results.

#### Findings and proposals relevant to parliaments:

- Ensuring the availability of the DCIS to a wide range of stakeholders, especially parliaments, remains a priority for improving the effectiveness of development cooperation.
- In 2019/2020, 58 per cent of countries responded that their DCIS were fully accessible to parliaments

<sup>2</sup> Tied development cooperation is defined as “official grants or loans that limit procurement to companies in the donor country or in a small group of countries”. Untying development cooperation, or removing those limitations, reduces transaction costs and improves ownership by recipient countries. Read more from the OECD [here](#).

compared to 40 per cent in 2018.

- Parliaments are increasingly regular users of DCIS. 53 per cent of countries responded that parliaments were regular users of DCIS data and information, a slight increase since 2017/2018. However, parliaments were reported to be regular users at a lower rate relative to other State actors.
- Only 23 per cent of countries surveyed reported that parliaments were sources of information for DCIS.

## V. National development cooperation forums (NDCFs)

NDCFs are gradually assuming a multi-stakeholder character, but further effort is needed to make them more inclusive of non-state actors and to leverage actors' comparative strengths. NDCFs typically involve national ministries and international development cooperation partners, in particular OECD-DAC partners, multilateral organizations and multilateral development banks.

Engagement of the full spectrum of non-state actors in NDCFs is challenged by weak enabling environments for participation, lack of incentives for engagement and poor quality of consultation. These issues need to be urgently addressed given the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships to effective COVID-19 response and recovery.

### Findings and proposals for parliaments:

- Parliaments should be more actively engaged in NDCFs. 43 per cent of countries with NDCFs responded that parliaments were highly or moderately involved in their NDCFs – reflecting a decline from the 53 per cent of countries reporting their involvement in the 2017/2018 survey. In 2019/2020, nearly one-quarter of countries responded that parliaments were not involved at all.
- Exploring the reasons for limited participation of parliaments in NDCFs could be an area of further research for the DCF in collaboration with parliamentarians.

## VI. Capacity support

Capacity support has strengthened the key enablers of effective development cooperation. Demand for further support will likely increase owing to challenges of the COVID-19 response and recovery. Countries have been receiving capacity support to strengthen all enablers, with the bulk channeled to DCIS and development cooperation units within national Governments.

### Findings and proposals for parliaments:

- Parliaments perform an essential oversight function in strengthening the quality and impact of development cooperation, and previous DCF surveys highlighted the need to boost their capacities.
- The 2019/2020 DCF Survey found that the situation remained unchanged – parliaments tend to receive minimal or no capacity support. Responsibility for their capacity strengthening ultimately rests with parliaments, and guidance from the Inter-Parliamentary has been issued to this end.<sup>3</sup>

## VII. Next steps

The virtual launch of the DCF Survey Study<sup>4</sup> in July 2020 has kicked off a series of DCF webinars to disseminate and dig still deeper into the findings of the study and emerging challenges of development cooperation in COVID-19 recovery. The series will engage parliaments and all stakeholders in the preparations for the Forum's next DCF High-level Meeting, to be held on 6-7 May 2021.

The DCF is a global multi-stakeholder platform which serves as the designated space within the United Nations to discuss trends, progress and frontier issues in international development cooperation toward achieving the 2030 Agenda. Further information on the forthcoming work of the DCF is available on the [DCF website](#), and the DCF team is also available to answer any questions via email at [dcf@un.org](mailto:dcf@un.org).

<sup>3</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), [Putting parliamentary self-development into practice. A Guide to the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments](#), 2019, Geneva.

<sup>4</sup> Find the video recording and summary of the interactive discussion, which engaged parliamentarians, of [the virtual launch here](#).