

DCF Survey Study 2020:

Toward effective development cooperation in the COVID-19 period



Development
Cooperation forum



United
Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

Overview and key messages

Since 2008, the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) surveys have provided evidence on the state of play of the effectiveness of international development cooperation on the ground. This 2020 DCF study presents the findings of the sixth DCF survey conducted in 2019/2020. As in previous rounds, the survey was structured around five key enablers: national development cooperation policies, country results frameworks, development cooperation information systems and national development cooperation forums, with capacity support as cross-cutting.

The survey was launched in 2019 prior to the pandemic. In parallel to analysing data collected from 55 participating countries, interviews of ten countries in the Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Latin America and Caribbean regions were conducted to deepen the analysis of

cooperation by charting the evolving design and use of the key enablers. The key enablers of effective development cooperation are not prescriptive and can be adapted according to diverse national contexts and shifting risks, opportunities and capacities relevant to the financing of national sustainable development priorities. By sharing their dynamic approaches, participating countries promote critical learning and behaviour change by their Governments and international development partners in pursuit of more effective development cooperation and progress toward the SDGs.

The unfolding COVID-19 crisis will impact on international development cooperation, with the potential to expand opportunities for more effective support to national sustainable development priorities and efforts to build back better. The 2020 DCF Survey

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

the survey data. The interviews presented an opportunity to learn about the impact of COVID-19 on development cooperation in these countries. Facing the unimaginable human toll of the pandemic, developing countries now reckon with a dual challenge: address the new risks posed by Covid-19 and advance the fight against existing vulnerabilities exacerbated by the pandemic. The interviews shed important light on the role of the enablers of effective development cooperation both in the immediate response to and longer-term recovery from the pandemic.

This is the third survey since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development in 2015. In many ways, the survey reflects the evolution of development cooperation over the period. The survey results show progress in a number of areas and stagnation in others.

Successive DCF Surveys have helped to sharpen understanding and support effective development

provides timely analysis in this context, reflecting the latest assessment of the implementation and adaptation of key enablers in participating countries and generating insights on more effective development cooperation in the COVID-19 era

National development cooperation policies (NDCPs) are firmly in place as essential components of the international development cooperation ecosystem. Their contents increasingly reflect the diversity of development finance and other means of implementation required by the 2030 Agenda. The majority of countries surveyed have NDCPs, and most of these policies have been adopted or updated since 2016. Others have draft policies awaiting approval or intentions to develop their NDCPs. The survey results show an increasing percentage of countries with NDCPs covering a wide range of development cooperation going well beyond ODA, including domestic resource mobilization, private finance, and South-South and triangular cooperation.

Some aspects of NDCPs have progressed more slowly since the first DCF survey in 2009. Successive DCF surveys found that parliaments played little or no role in the oversight of development cooperation, and that they required capacity support to do so. NDCPs increasingly cover a diverse range of development actors, reflecting the multi-stakeholder partnerships required for achieving the SDGs. Yet, the policies still focus predominantly on the national government and international development cooperation partners, including multilateral organizations. The policies do not cover civil society organizations, philanthropic organizations and the private sector to the same extent.

The next generation of NDCPs needs to pay greater attention to the quality and impact of the policy. Evidence and lessons learned from implementation should inform new and updated NDCPs. Such evidence is best obtained through timely, robust evaluation. Evaluations in turn require reliable data. Survey participants recognized the importance of NDCPs and reviewing their contribution to effective development cooperation and results.

Improvements show in the content of country results frameworks (CRFs) and their application in monitoring development cooperation. Countries require capacity support to operationalize and strengthen their results frameworks. More than half of the respondent countries have CRFs in place. CRFs 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.

While over half of respondent countries have CRFs in place, there remains a sizeable percentage that do not have CRFs (or equivalent). There are countries that do not see the need for a specific country results framework for development cooperation and prefer to rely on results frameworks and indicators in their national sustainable development plans or strategies. There are structural barriers, such as the division of labour between ministries in some countries that make it difficult to have a single results framework for development cooperation. In other instances, countries cite the need for capacity support to develop their CRFs. The risk of not having a robust CRF is that it may lead to use by external partners of their own parallel frameworks, which can undermine country priorities as set out in the NDCPs. The 2019/2020 DCF survey found signs of backsliding towards the use of parallel frameworks.

Development cooperation information systems (DCIS) are in place in most countries and are assisting them in improving the transparency and management

of development cooperation. Quality of data remains a challenge for a number of countries. There is room for broadening the scope of the DCIS, its uses and accessibility. DCIS currently track the 'basics' of development cooperation, namely, current and projected disbursements; progress on projects/ programmes, on-budget flows; and progress against government and partner targets. Few countries participating in the DCF survey have DCIS that track progress on untying development cooperation; use of development cooperation to combat inequalities; and gender-disaggregated expenditures and results.

Data quality constrains the functioning of the DCIS and its practical value: nearly half of the surveyed countries report that data from international development cooperation partners were not complete. This limits the reliability of the DCIS for budgeting and planning future activities, with implications also for its contribution to integrated national financing frameworks (INFFs). Interviews of countries revealed actions underway to enhance DCIS. For example, linking the DCIS to the budgeting and procurement system; redesigning the DCIS to enable linking of projects to the SDGs and the NSDS; and upgrading the DCIS to track COVID-19 financial flows. Initiatives to improve data quality include better quality control at point of data entry, training providers of data, and enhancing the capability of the DCIS to extract data generated routinely by public administration systems.

The percentage of countries reporting parliaments as regular users of the DCIS and making the DCIS fully accessible to parliaments has improved. Notable improvements also show in accessibility of the DCIS to persons with disabilities, independent monitoring groups and policy think-tanks, the private sector, philanthropic organizations and the general public. Yet, giving full access does not always translate to regular use of the DCIS by these stakeholders, in particular, the private sector and philanthropic organizations.

National development cooperation forums (NDCFs) are gradually assuming a multi-stakeholder character. More needs to be done to make these forums more inclusive of non-state actors and leverage their comparative strengths. NDCFs typically involve national ministries and international development cooperation partners, in particular OECD-DAC partners, multilateral organizations and multilateral development banks. The 2019/2020 results show improvement in engaging local and regional governments in NDCFs. This is a positive development in view of the crucial role local and regional governments play in the 2030 Agenda, including the contribution they potentially make to Voluntary National Reviews.

NDCFs are still not fully engaging non-state actors, for various reasons. In some cases, the enabling environment is not conducive to civil society or private sector participation. In others, governments do not have clarity on what they expect from non-state actors and how to incentivize their participation in NDCFs. The COVID-19 pandemic underscores the necessity for multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborative approaches to addressing new and emerging development challenges. Looking ahead, national governments will need to improve the quality of consultation with non-state actors and foster an environment more conducive to their participation in NDCFs and related development cooperation processes.

While capacity support is strengthening the key enablers of effective development cooperation, demand for capacity support will likely increase in the coming year with the challenges of the COVID-19 response and recovery. Capacity support to strengthen the key enablers went most frequently to enhancement of the DCIS and to development coordination units. Local and regional governments and parliaments tended to receive minimal or no capacity support. Looking ahead, survey participants prioritised the need for capacity support to

strengthen both DCIS and their monitoring and evaluation capacities.

Countries are using development cooperation in their national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Development cooperation partners are redirecting resources from new or existing projects/programmes to priority areas identified by governments. Interviewed countries expressed uncertainty as to whether bilateral international development cooperation partners, with their own economies under severe strain, would be able to meet their development cooperation commitments in the coming years.

Moving forward with the pandemic response and recovery, developing countries will need strengthened capacities for mobilizing, managing and tracking financial and non-financial resources. They will need reliable DCIS to make difficult choices among competing priorities on where resources should be channelled. They will need strengthened capacities for partnership and collaboration with a diverse range of national stakeholders and beneficiaries and international development cooperation partners.