Executive summary

Since 2009, the Development Cooperation Forum surveys have examined key enablers of mutual accountability and transparency, with analysis structured around national development cooperation policies, country results frameworks, national development cooperation forums and development cooperation information systems, and the related capacity support needs (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Main features of key enablers of mutual accountability and transparency

National development cooperation policy	Country results framework	National development cooperation forum	Development cooperation information system
Vision Priorities Targets	Monitoring targets Long-term impact	Multi-stakeholder dialogue Review progress against targets	Accurate, comprehensive and timely data

Over time survey findings have shown substantive changes made to how national governments articulate and approach the mobilizing of support to align their development cooperation with national priorities. Yet, pertaining to some of the issues, there has been stagnation of progress. Analyses of the 2018 survey findings provide the following insights.

Aid versus broader development cooperation policies. The 2016 DCF survey showed countries typically having aid policies in place informed by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action. While recognizing the critical role played by aid, the 2016 study highlighted the broader concept and practice of development cooperation reflected in the 2030 Agenda. In this subsequent 2018 survey, responding countries reported including a more diverse range of development cooperation aligned with their national development priorities. Just over half of respondents reported their national development cooperation policies covered the use of domestic resource mobilization strategies. The inclusion of South-South and triangular cooperation in national development cooperation policies is also encouraging. Policies, though, were less likely to cover private finance for sustainable development or issues related to blended finance. Better understanding is needed on what this broadening in the scope of policies entails – in terms of filling gaps in existing national development cooperation policies, changing processes, and consultations.

Better engaging the range of development cooperation partners. While some of the enablers have slowly started to reflect engagement of a wider range of actors, this is not the case for all, leaving scope for their improved use for whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. Countries still reported minimal use of their national development cooperation policies for articulating institutional responsibilities within the government, the inclusion of national stakeholders and domestic beneficiaries, the role of philanthropic organizations, private sector actors and NGOs. Though, compared to 2016 findings, more countries responded consulting with local governments in the design of their policies. Many national development cooperation forums are also yet to assume a multi-stakeholder character, and involve mainly international development cooperation partners and multilateral organizations. Non-state actors, NGOs/civil society, the private sector, and private philanthropic organizations are reported to have a low-to-moderate level of involvement in these forums.

Setting of targets for development cooperation partners and non-state actors. The majority of responding countries has a framework for monitoring the performance of development cooperation. It is encouraging to know that compared to previous years there is a smaller proportion of countries that reported partners used parallel results frameworks. The monitoring of progress continues to focus on national governments, with insufficient attention given to progress of international development cooperation partners in meeting their commitments. This is partly a consequence of the difficulty many national governments experience in setting targets for international development cooperation partners. As few as 38 per cent of countries with country results frameworks reported that the monitoring of targets improved alignment of partners' activities with national and sectoral priorities.

Strengthening periodic, multi-stakeholder review of development cooperation processes. Two previous DCF surveys noted weakness in monitoring progress against national development cooperation policy targets. As in the 2016 survey, very few countries reported commissioning an independent evaluation of international development cooperation in the past 12 months, and fewer signaled the intention to do so. Minimal evaluation may be indicative of insufficient capacity in responding countries. Several countries still did not involve their parliamentarians in national development cooperation processes. Yet, encouraging is the high number of countries that have development cooperation information systems in place. These contain information primarily on disbursements and progress with implementation of projects and programmes, technical cooperation and capacity building. There are gaps in the scope of the development cooperation information systems in many of the responding countries, most notably, the tracking of progress with untying development cooperation, tracking gender-disaggregated expenditures and results, and tracking the use of development cooperation to combat different types of inequalities.

Capacity support needs. Support for strengthening monitoring and evaluation capacities is one of the two most pressing capacity building needs identified in this survey round. This is especially the case for impact evaluations of NDCPs and international development cooperation. National governments also identified the need for capacity support in tracking South-South cooperation, monitoring and evaluating private sector and the development of integrated monitoring and evaluation systems for development cooperation. With a new generation of NDCPs, there is even greater urgency for parliamentarians to receive capacity support for their oversight role in development cooperation.