



2012 Development Cooperation Forum

Making accountability operational: *practice and perspectives*

Informal summary of thematic and regional workshops

Workshop (A): Post-conflict countries and countries in vulnerable situations

- Chair: H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, Vice President of ECOSOC, Spain
- Moderator: Peter Moors, Director-General for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Belgium
- Panellists: H.E. Abdou Karim Meckassoua, Minister of Planning and Economy, Central African Republic
Elisabetta Belloni, Director General for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Italy
Maureen Quinn, Senior Advisor, International Peace Institute
Yoka Brandt, Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF
Conrad Sauv , Secretary-General and CEO, Canadian Red Cross, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

The panellists and speakers from the floor provided a rich set of perspectives on dealing with mutual accountability in post-conflict countries and countries in vulnerable situations. Perspectives expressed in this workshop were those of governments of countries in vulnerable situations, donors, civil society, multilateral organizations, and think tanks. While these viewpoints differed, they were generally complementary resulting in broad agreement on a number of key points.

- ❖ **Mutual accountability has proven most difficult to realize.** The task of building mutual accountability in post conflict and vulnerable countries is inherently difficult because of lack of trust and confidence among relevant stakeholders as well as weak institutions. Yet, pursuing mutual accountability in such country situations is even more important given the need to respond to both the prevailing crisis and to develop national ownership and capacity as prerequisites for long-term sustainable development.
- ❖ **Mutual accountability between donors and programme countries is important but needs to be seen in the context of multiple accountability** – including the roles of governments, parliaments, civil society, publics – and beneficiaries at the local level. The principle of multiple accountability applies to donors, including to their taxpayers, but also to programme countries and to the actual beneficiaries. Achieving accountability is even more complex for multilateral institutions in such country situations.
- ❖ **Working in post-conflict and vulnerable situations will always carry certain risks.** Yet increased scepticism about the effectiveness of aid is adding pressure on issues relating to fiduciary management and corruption to a point where donors have become highly risk averse. In this context it should be noted that while it will always carry some risk to act in post conflict and vulnerable situations, it can be more risky not to act. There is need to rally support in provider countries to accept the risks involved and to find innovative ways to manage the risk rather than retreating into being too risk averse. The need for willingness to accept the risk involved and find innovative solutions was particularly important in crisis and immediate post-conflict situations. This was the area of most contention. One view was that this willingness to accept risk should be utilized and was important for maintaining security as well. Another perspective was that this approach risked siding with one group or party over others and so worsening divisions.
- ❖ **Capacity development is crucial – emphasized by all speakers.** This included general capacity development of government and civil society, specific capacity development for mutual accountability, and capacity at the local level. Capacity development is crucial for national resilience as well as reducing fragility.
- ❖ **There are signs of progress on mutual accountability.** For example, donors are willing to be more transparent about aid. And programme countries are making an effort to strengthen national institutions of accountability.
- ❖ The recommendations of LCD-IV and the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States adopted at the Busan High-level Forum last year was seen to provide useful guidance in this regard. However, progress was uneven. Compacts were proving to be useful in some circumstances, providing a light, but useful way of building confidence among stakeholders. But in other countries, they have produced weak results. It was important to be realistic and to recognize that aspirations can easily exceed what is achievable.

Workshop (B): Mutual accountability and transparency in Africa: progress and challenges

Chair: H.E. Ambassador **Mootaz Ahmadein Khalil**, Vice President of ECOSOC, Egypt
Moderator: H.E. Samura Kamara, Minister of Finance, Sierra Leone
Panellists: H.E. Pacharo Ralph Jooma MP, Deputy Minister of Finance, Malawi
Hon. Goeffrey Ekanya, Member of Parliament, Uganda
Collins Magalasi, Executive Director, AFRODAD
Namhla Mniki-Mangaliso, Director, African Monitor

This workshop explored the challenges that different actors are facing in Africa to make mutual accountability become a reality. The broad range of lessons and perspectives shared by executive and legislative branches of governments, think tanks and civil society organizations suggest that efforts to promote accountability and transparency are well under way and vibrant in the African context. However, participants agreed that progress is slow and much more needs to be done. Regional processes to exchange experiences and an African minimum standard for mutual accountability are seen as key to ensuring that accountability actually leads to the desired change of behaviour.

The following are key messages from the discussion:

- ❖ **Mutual accountability is strongly anchored in the regional context.** Aid quality is a common theme – ranging from the Cotonou Agreement to the World Economic Forum on Africa. While elements of accountability are widely known, the main question is one of implementation.
- ❖ **Africa must make serious efforts to become a partner in development.** A major concern is the unequal status of development cooperation actors, especially in aid dependent African countries. Reciprocal commitments are rarely accounted for by donors and programme country governments. The latter feel that they become agents of providers. Countries lack appropriate mechanisms to avoid that decisions on aid are based on geopolitical or commercial interests.
- ❖ **Mutual accountability should build on domestic accountability.** Domestic resources and aid monies must be equally accounted for. Accountability towards citizens primarily concerns financial accountability for results that are appreciated by local communities. To generate democratic ownership, this relationship must build on an exchange of national development priorities. “Green accountability” to reduce the costs for future generations was addressed as a critical concern.
- ❖ **Africa must make better use of technologies** to pass on results of evaluations and assessments to communities in a targeted manner. This particularly concerns the level of local government engagement and the role of the private sector.
- ❖ **More aid should be routed through national systems in Africa.** Without this opportunity, the imbalances in development partnerships will not be rectified in the longer run. Yet, strong political will must also come from governments in Africa themselves, notably to step up their efforts in strengthening institutional and legal frameworks and country systems to enable effective, coherent and transparent management and coordination of development cooperation.
- ❖ **Encouraging examples of mutual accountability exist and should be shared more widely.** In countries with effective mechanisms, donors are “named” and encouraged to change their behaviour – with very positive and quick responses in most cases. This demonstrates how an enabling environment for accountability is critical for development partnerships on an equal footing.
- ❖ **Africa must invest heavily in data collection,** analysis and interpretation to equip all actors with the necessary tools for accountability. A strong statistical base is essential for making concrete policy recommendations that feed into development cooperation negotiations.
- ❖ **A minimum standard for mutual accountability** is critical to promote mutual learning and peer exchanges and to encourage targeted capacity development. Regional mechanisms, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program are effective regional processes with numerous lessons on how to promote mutual and responsible commitments on the continent.
- ❖ **Engagement of citizens is central to making mutual accountability work.** Active citizen engagement in local-level delivery of development cooperation is important to demand for results and better delivery. “Poverty hearings” or accountability screenings in the education sector to detect sources of inefficiencies are prime examples. Major concerns remain with regard to keeping civil society space to represent citizens.
- ❖ **The DCF should support the development of a minimum accountability standard for Africa. It should also continue to monitor development cooperation commitments to Africa.** An African standard can provide the

basis for independent assessments of progress of all actors in different country contexts. A region as a whole could thus also better address the behaviour of individual providers.

Workshop (C): Strengthening development cooperation in the Pacific: what can regional compacts contribute?

Chair: H.E. Ambassador Desra Percaya, Vice President of ECOSOC, Indonesia
Moderator: Feleti Teo, Deputy Secretary-General, Pacific Island Forum Secretariat
Panellists: Amanda Ellis, Deputy Secretary International Development, Head of the New Zealand Aid Programme, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand
Noumea Simi, Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Finance, Samoa

Pacific Islands, with the highest per capita ODA worldwide, have made least progress in development, being the second least likely region to meet the MDGs by 2015. This is known as the “**Pacific Paradox**”. The workshop provided valuable insights into the working of the regional compact and outlined its strengths, specific challenges and opportunities based on specific examples.

- ❖ The creation of the **Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Cooperation** between the Pacific Islands and multiple providers in 2009 was a quantum leap towards mutual accountability and the tracking of aid allocation. The Cairns Compact as a regional compact takes into account elements of both national and global initiatives. The Pacific Islands Forum facilitates good practices, with donors and recipients as equal partners.
- ❖ **Aid quality and coordinated partnerships have advanced since.** All Pacific Island countries have developed national strategic frameworks to reform public financial management, promote transparency charters and strengthen inclusive approaches, adjusting global recommendations to strengthen mutual accountability in a regional context.
- ❖ **Better donor coordination is a critical outcome of strengthened mutual accountability.** Instead of “lead donors”, actors in the region talk about “donor coordination” partners. The aim of delegating authority of aid decisions among donors at the country level is to minimize burden for donors and to base decisions on country priorities. Building on a set of “joint partnership commitments”, Pacific Island countries can, for example, flag gaps in capacity development and requests to specific donor countries, including knowledge and expertise, and the donor country adapts to these needs.
- ❖ **Great emphasis in the region is placed on country ownership and leadership.** The Pacific Island Forum relies on every country to define development priorities and to highlight their current needs. There is still an on-going process to introduce a more tailored approach to address the concerns based on the different stages of development in the Pacific Islands. Countries are assisted in developing policy matrices that spell out the roles of all development cooperation actors. One objective is to develop a harmonized systematic matrix across the Pacific Islands region.
- ❖ **A major strength of the Pacific Islands compact is its peer review dimension.** Currently, 14 countries in the region are voluntarily signed up to participate in peer review teams. While these rely heavily on country ownership and leadership, the countries review each others performance in what has been termed a practice of South-South Cooperation at its best.
- ❖ **Inclusion of non-executive stakeholders and promotion of private public partnerships is critical for the regional compact to prosper further.** An annual high-level dialogue is organized by the Forum to give all non-state leaders an adequate voice. Public private partnerships have been on the rise ever since the Compact was set up. Building capacity, promoting the tourism industry and launching pilot programmes to create jobs and promote pro-poor growth have been successful examples of private-public collaboration. As follow-up to Rio+20, new partnerships are being set up with a strong focus on food security and resilience. Disaster prevention and risk reduction will also be a main pillar of the regional compact in future.
- ❖ **Commitment to results-based outcomes is key for progress in development.** To this effect, quarterly consultations are set up with providers to review progress based on the results of joint annual sector reviews.