



DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FORUM

High-level Symposium in preparation of the 2012 DCF

“Gearing Development Cooperation towards the MDGs: Effectiveness and Results”

5 – 6 May, Bamako, Mali

Background

The 2005 World Summit mandated the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to convene a biennial high-level *Development Cooperation Forum* (DCF) to *review trends and progress in international development cooperation; promote greater coherence among the development activities of different development partners; and strengthen the normative and operational link* in the work of the United Nations.

The Forum aims to promote international development cooperation to accelerate progress towards Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs), including the MDGs. It has become a principal venue for global policy dialogue on aid quantity, quality and effectiveness and policy coherence. It allows Member States, non-governmental organizations, parliamentarians, local governments and the private sector to share lessons learned for how to increase the results of development cooperation for the MDGs.

Objectives of the Mali Symposium

The Mali symposium is the first milestone in preparing for the 2012 DCF. It takes place when prospects for global economic recovery remain uncertain, and the world’s poorest citizens continue to suffer from delays in reaching the MDGs. The global economic crisis is dramatically reducing commitments by OECD donors, and leading them to stress the need for greater results from aid. However, sustainable results can be achieved only through developing country leadership, and mutual accountability between donors and developing countries - so that both sides are fully held to account for the results of aid.

The Mali Symposium will focus on five sets of issues:

- civil society, donors and developing countries are moving beyond discussing “aid effectiveness” (how delivery methods of aid enhance results) to “**development effectiveness**” (how development cooperation can contribute to national development). Yet they have dramatically different definitions of “development effectiveness”, which urgently need to be reconciled to ensure that dialogue on this issue produces results.
- All stakeholders support “**ownership**” as the best means to increase impact and sustainability of aid. This means developing countries have clear costed development strategies, focussed on results; donors reducing conditionality sharply; and parliamentarians, local governments, social partners and civil society being fully involved in dialogue on aid and its results.
- The Third United Nations Conference on **Least Developed Countries** (LDCs) held in Brussels in 2001 agreed that aid was crucial to lift countries out of LDC status. It set targets for amounts and untying, but these have not been fully met, and

many other targets have been set which take little account of LDC special needs. LDCs require a detailed framework via which providers and LDCs can be held accountable for the quantity, quality and results of aid.

- **Mutual accountability** for results (between developing countries and donors) is key to improving aid results. Some countries have managed to achieve progress: there is an urgent need to work out how this can be accelerated, in particular by involving parliaments, social partners and civil society.
- **Education** is a sector where there have been dramatic improvements in results through Education for All, and where there is a high degree of accountability through the EFA Global Monitoring Report as well as the Global Campaign for Education. Positive lessons can be learned and used in other sectors to ensure country-led aid maximizes results. The findings will provide critical inputs for the Annual Ministerial Review of ECOSOC, which will focus on education in Geneva in July 2011.

The Mali Symposium will allow high-level participants and practitioners from all stakeholder groups to debate how to scale up tested solutions to improve development results by improving the quality of aid, through interactive dialogue among and within different groups.

Results of the Mali Symposium

The symposium results are expected to be agreement on:

- how best aid can achieve development results in a cost-effective manner and how this should be measured;
- how broad-based country ownership can best ensure that these results are sustainable in different country contexts;
- proposals for a development cooperation accountability framework between LDCs and their donors, in light of planned monitoring and follow-up to LDC-IV;
- proposals for improving country-level mutual accountability between developing countries, donors and stakeholders;
- measures to enhance accountability for development results produced by aid to education.

The recommendations of the Mali symposium will help to prepare for the 2012 United Nations Development Cooperation Forum in late June/early July 2012. They will also provide immediate inputs into the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries to be held in Istanbul in May 2011. In addition, the discussions on mutual accountability, ownership and results will help to prepare UN inputs for the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness organized by the OECD-DAC, which will take place in Busan, Republic of Korea, in November/December 2011.