

United Nations capacity-building project to strengthen national mutual accountability mechanisms

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Accountability for commitments and results in development cooperation can be expected to assume high importance in the implementation of a unified post-2015 development agenda. Policy analysis and dialogue conducted under the auspices of the UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) indicate that only few developing countries have in place strong mutual accountability mechanisms in the area of development cooperation. UNDESA is launching a project that aims to support developing countries in strengthening capacity to implement and improve such mechanisms.

Mutual accountability is at the core of the MDGs.....

The High-level Plenary Meeting on the MDGs reaffirmed the importance of strengthening mutual accountability (MA) to improve the quality and development impact of aid. Southern providers have also acknowledged the need for enhanced accountability in development partnerships,¹ and civil society and private philanthropic organizations have established similar goals.

.....and also the Monterrey Consensus

Partnership agreements in the area of development assistance often place the primary onus of reporting on developing countries, with much less demands on the providers. This tends to contradict international commitments on the effectiveness of development cooperation. To address this asymmetry, MA has been placed at the core of the Monterrey Consensus with countries agreeing to promote effective partnerships based on the recognition of national leadership to ensure ODA effectiveness and poverty reduction impact.

Mutual accountability “enablers” can induce change

Analysis conducted by DESA suggests that MA mechanisms need to include: an agreed national aid/partnership policy; locally-driven frameworks to assess quality and results of development cooperation with specific annual performance targets for individual providers; annual analysis of such progress based on an inclusive system of review bodies in government, culminating in a discussion of progress at a national top-level meeting; full participation of civil society and oversight by parliament; and access to information on all aspects of development cooperation. Only few developing countries have all such “enablers” in place.

.....but require political buy-in and ownership

MA “enablers” impact on governance and coordination of development cooperation at the country level. Political buy-in, like-minded donors, and

democratic ownership are vital pull factors, as well as the strengthening of national MA capacity.

A UNDESA capacity-building project.....

In response to the demand of Member States, UNDESA has designed a project to support, initially, four countries, to promote implementation of MA “enablers” to accelerate progress in realizing development cooperation commitments. The project aims to enhance the institutional and human resource capacity of aid management/coordination actors in government, parliament, civil society and local government to engage in the design and implementation of effective MA frameworks.

.....aims at supporting national MA efforts

In each country, a national task force led by the Government with participation of a donor, civil society and parliament, as well as other actors, will facilitate in-country workshops to assess present strengths and weaknesses, develop and agree on an action plan, provide sound analysis of progress in promoting MA and aid transparency and the preparation of relevant tool kits. The findings and recommendations of country-level initiatives will also serve as input to the 3rd International Development Cooperation Report of UNDESA for the 2014 DCF which is expected to focus on “*Accountable Development Partnerships*”.

Mutual accountability will remain at the heart of the global development agenda

In times of growing diversity of actors, flows and modalities and with the post-2015 development agenda unfolding, effective MA will further assist in translating global commitments into national implementation. UNDESA will continue to partner with all interested actors at the national, regional and global levels with a view to promoting synergy and complementarity in this work.

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¹ See GA resolution 64/222.