

A transformative post-2015 development agenda will require a multi-layered framework for monitoring and review of development cooperation

The proposed Sustainable Development Goals are much broader in scope than the Millennium Development Goals that have provided a global framework for development cooperation for the past 15 years.

New ways must be found to mobilize, allocate and use unprecedented levels of domestic and international, public and private financial resources and other means of implementation (MOI) more effectively. Means of implementation are proposed for each goal as well as in SDG17, on a renewed global partnership for sustainable development.

All stakeholders will need to develop an understanding of the implications for development cooperation of a unified and universal global development agenda. There will be a particular need to strengthen capacity for an integrated approach to the three dimensions of sustainable development, economic, social and environmental.

The emerging agenda will require aligning better at all levels the different approaches to MOI from the Monterrey and Rio tracks. Within that context, the array of development cooperation commitments will surely be complex, comprised of a large number of targets, many inter-linkages and diversity of financial and non-financial resources, mobilized from multiple sources and blended in various ways.

This complexity will also affect the pathways towards reaching sustainable development results. To implement such an agenda, one essential ingredient will be coherent and simple, yet effective arrangements for monitoring and review of development cooperation, geared towards knowledge sharing and mutual learning.

An effective multi-layered framework, linking local, national, regional and global levels, would have to provide incentives for all stakeholders to engage in monitoring and review of development cooperation commitments, both financial and non-financial. It would have to build on existing practices and make available timely and high quality information on progress.

The national level is pivotal for effective monitoring and review

The current arrangements at national level will require some changes and face challenges to live up to more ambitious and complex commitments. The key task will be to build on and rationalize existing mechanisms, adjust their focus as needed and strengthen coherence among them in creating a holistic framework for effective monitoring and review of development cooperation.

Structures and processes for monitoring and review of development cooperation vary from country to country. They may include annual bilateral assessment forums; high-level meetings at the political level, usually preceded by technical review meetings; development partner forums engaging all partners; and sectorial forums.

Monitoring and review of development cooperation will be ever important in a post-2015 setting

Monitoring helps to track progress against development cooperation commitments provides information for review processes and informs dialogue among stakeholders. It identifies lessons and best practice examples and provides an evidence base to improve results.

Reviews present an essential opportunity for knowledge sharing and mutual learning and for making improvements. By strengthening review systems and processes, particularly at country level, accountability – and ultimately, sustainable development results – can be realized and enhanced.

Monitoring development cooperation commitments in a post-2015 setting will be challenging. Yet, monitoring and review mechanisms are constantly improving, with much scope for synergy in measuring progress towards agreed targets. Sound technical expertise will be needed to define measurable indicators in a transparent and inclusive way.

This policy brief is based on a study on “Monitoring, review and accountability for development cooperation to support implementation of a post-2015 development agenda”, by independent consultant Angela Bester. The study was commissioned by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as part of a UNDESA research project funded by UKAID on “Development cooperation in a post-2015 setting”. The views presented do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations or the United Kingdom. The study aims to generate ideas for the post-2015 discussions in advance of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July 2015 and the High-level Meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum in New York in July 2016.



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Using enablers of mutual accountability to identify changes and challenges for monitoring and review of development cooperation

Enablers of mutual accountability can be used to assess possible changes and challenges at national level post-2015, in the terms and scope of monitoring and accountability mechanisms. Enablers are guidelines and processes that support changes in behavior of partners and programme countries in the provision and use of development cooperation. Such changes contribute to improving the quality of development cooperation, which in turn contributes to achieving sustainable development results. National surveys by UNDESA for the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) have identified six enablers of national mutual accountability.

I) Political leadership is demonstrated through a clear development vision and objective, consistently communicated to stakeholders and citizens. The extent to which all other enablers can be activated is largely dependent on political leadership provided by governments, in both partner and programme countries. It is a key manifestation of country ownership and leadership in development processes.

II) National development cooperation policies provide a framework for managing development cooperation. Well-structured policies spell out principles and objectives for development cooperation, and specific roles and responsibilities or division of labor among various parties involved. They explain decision-making processes and ways of monitoring implementation. Ideally, the policies are not isolated from but linked to national (sustainable) development strategies and plans.

III) Monitoring frameworks vary in scope and content, depending on the specific country. Typically, they monitor current and projected disbursements and track indications of future commitments where available. Quality-related aspects of development cooperation also feature in some monitoring frameworks, guided by commitments on ODA effectiveness. Monitoring frameworks are essentially documents that may outline areas and indicators to be monitored, the frequency of monitoring and reporting, format, and roles and responsibilities of parties to the framework. These frameworks are often the outcome of negotiation between programme and partner governments. Effective monitoring frameworks include a process of assessment or review against the indicators set in the framework.

IV) Effectiveness of institutional structures for development cooperation, including national development cooperation coordination forums and oversight bodies, is a fourth enabler. Such forums provide a platform for development cooperation actors and are the most influential forums for discussing overall progress in meeting development cooperation commitments. They can be expected to play an important role post-2015 in a multi-layered monitoring and review framework. Oversight bodies include national parliaments, which approve national budgets and may have a role in approving external finance. They also include supreme audit institutions which are an important part of the national accountability framework, mandated to audit the finances and performance of public institutions.

V) Data and information is a fifth enabler of national mutual accountability. Program countries usually have development cooperation information systems in place; however, their effectiveness varies from country to country. Most commonly, these systems include financial information, particularly current disbursements made by partners and projected ones with firm commitments; some also include disaggregated information, often focused on grants. Systems might also collect information on delivery modalities and progress on projects and programmes. Partners collect large volumes of information on development cooperation to monitor progress and results and to report, using varying types of information and formats.

VI) Capacity development is the sixth enabler and the keystone in addressing the various changes and challenges for national level monitoring and review of development cooperation post-2015.

Capacity development as the foundation

However 'overtaxed' as a concept, capacity building remains the main ingredient to effectively adapt all enablers of mutual accountability and make them 'fit' for a post-2015 setting. Often development cooperation coordination ministries have insufficient capacity to execute their mandate, given their small size and their having a disproportionately heavy burden of reporting.

National development cooperation coordination units and line ministries will have to be strengthened. Where appropriate, partners should support capacity development of these units in programme countries, based on thorough capacity assessments determining the nature and extent of capacity building support required.

The units will have to provide practical guidance and tools to support line ministries and local authorities to use, manage and report on development cooperation. They should also consider establishing communities of practice for sharing knowledge and information, supported by platforms linked to regional and global communities

Parliaments should invest in developing capacities for independent research on development cooperation issues, including parliamentary research staff to provide technical knowledge and policy advice on development cooperation. Inter- and intra-regional exchange visits between parliamentarians aimed to facilitate mutual understanding of their respective roles, and an appreciation of what is happening in the field of development cooperation, should be encouraged.

Partner countries and other development cooperation actors should ensure that their in-country representatives are competent in their understanding of their headquarters policies and procedures, as well as of the national policy, planning and budgetary processes of the programme country. They should also have the requisite systems to provide timely, accurate information to programme governments.

Partners should invest in developing institutional capacities in programme countries to analyze data needed for effectively managing development cooperation. This includes developing the skills of individuals in data analysis; supporting the development of data and information policies; and supporting the review and modernization of development cooperation information systems.

All countries and partners should improve their tracking of gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation. This includes strengthening capacities to track financial commitments and other MOI with a gender lens, improving gender-disaggregated reporting, and developing tools to assess the results or outcomes of financial flows and other MOI on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Changes and challenges for national monitoring and review post-2015

Political leadership will become synonymous with ensuring that governments are accountable to their citizens and engage constructively with oversight institutions. They should be willing to draw on technical advice in making policy and political decisions and align development

cooperation priorities with priorities of programme countries, ensuring that policies and practices at headquarters and in the field support this alignment. There may be a lack of political will to follow through on commitments – if political risks associated with development cooperation commitments become too high. Weak frameworks for monitoring and review at national level may also contribute to a lack of incentives to implement commitments.

The content of **national development cooperation policies** can be expected to change. The extent will depend on the national context and existing policies; it will have to reflect changes in the policies of partner countries, including concrete partnerships with international philanthropic foundations. There is increasing pressure on actors in international development cooperation to be transparent about their spending.

Challenges will include the absence of such policies in many countries, the lack of specificity regarding roles and responsibilities, the lack of robust results indicators, possibly limited engagement of several stakeholders and a limited link to national development strategies.

Monitoring frameworks post-2015 will need to capture a more diverse range of development commitments – both financial and non-financial - and will need to reflect the integrated nature of and interlinkages among the proposed SDGs. Progress reviews towards agreed goals will need to be holistic, while at the same time catering for a more diverse range of development partners, both governmental and non-governmental.

Key challenges will lie in making performance reviews of development cooperation mutual, and in finding ways to best incorporate partner targets in monitoring frameworks and gender targets in development cooperation. The limited range of partners covered by current monitoring frameworks presents another challenge. Last but not least, considerable resources will be needed to enable a more holistic review of integrated commitments, considerable resources.

To further **enhance effectiveness of institutional structures for development cooperation**, national coordination forums will need to re-orient themselves to the new agenda and its commitments, with the universal nature of the SDGs and mutuality in mind. This could mean changes to the scope of discussions at these forums, including a range of non- financial commitments. These possible changes also have

implications for the analytical inputs required, which will be more complex, and for the membership of national development cooperation forums and governance arrangements, which could see a broadening of participants, including not only a wider range of partners but also in-country development actors playing a critical role in domestic and social accountability.

At present, these national forums rarely cover partners beyond DAC countries and offer little incentive for non-state actors to participate. The typical focus of such forums on programme country performance is often not balanced with discussions on performance of partners in respect to quality, timeliness and other aspects of development cooperation. Programme countries' lack of capacity to organize forums and set agendas, leading to a reliance on partner countries, can also undermine mutuality.

To improve available **data and information** both the quality and coverage of data will need to increase. Enhancing weak national data and statistics systems will be key. Data collection systems will also need to cater for more complex data on financing and other MOI and their results, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as more disaggregated, timely and comparable data.

Limited capacity to collect, analyze and synthesize large data volumes for decision-making, exacerbated by reporting burdens, is hampering progress. The data revolution risks leaving behind countries with limited access to IT. Data in many countries is lacking in quality and timeliness, and there are gaps in tracking commitments from a gender equality perspective. Other challenges include the insufficient use of alternative sources of information, information gaps of non-state actors, limited access to information by citizens, and inadequate governance of data systems.

The need for a change of mindset and a collaborative and inclusive approach

For **political leadership** to be more effective, politicians will have to be sensitized to use information and the data available to inform policies and decisions. To this end, the value of data and information should be demonstrated in practical ways. Involving politicians in the design of monitoring and review frameworks increases a sense of ownership and commitment.

All countries will need capacity to formulate effective **national development cooperation policies**. Such policies should: i) be linked closely

with broader sustainable development policies and more explicitly to broader domestic resource mobilization strategies and budgetary processes; ii) reflect the range of development cooperation, financing and other MOI; iii) cater to a broader range of actors, including by reflecting their distinct roles and responsibilities; and iv) have robust indicators and means to monitor. Non-state actors should be engaged from early on in the design and formulation of the policies, with explicit roles for national parliaments, including through national stakeholder consultations. The policies should be reviewed every 3-5 years to ensure their relevance.

National **monitoring frameworks** could potentially be resource intensive, as they will need to adjust to the complex inter-linkages among the different SDGs and support an integrated approach to sustainable development. Programme countries should be supported in developing new or adapting existing national monitoring frameworks, including results and partner performance frameworks, and indicators.

Decision-makers should be made aware of the value of using gender-disaggregated data to improve effectiveness of policies and programs, and achieve sustainable development results. Oversight bodies such as national parliaments should be encouraged to demand gender-responsive budgeting in development cooperation, and reporting disaggregated by gender.

National monitoring and reporting frameworks for development cooperation should form part of and be aligned with national frameworks used for monitoring national development priorities. This is essential to ensure an integrated approach to monitoring and review of the post-2015 development agenda as a whole.

Governments should **enhance the effectiveness of institutional structures for development cooperation** by investing in capacity to manage their national development cooperation forums effectively. This includes ensuring that the mandate and terms of reference of the forum are captured in the national development cooperation policy; that the forum has adequate resources for preparing and convening forum events; and that systems are in place to track and follow-up on decisions taken at forum meetings.

Governments should find creative ways to secure the participation of all relevant partners in national development coordination forums, for example, in the form of dialogues with specific

partners on their role and contribution in development cooperation. Partner dialogues can be complemented with annual multi-partner dialogues, which could also be done on a sectoral or thematic, such as water-related issues, involving a range of partners working in this area.

Local governments play a vital role in implementation of development cooperation and in facilitating the flow of monitoring information between local and national levels; they should be included in national development cooperation forums.

Development partners should support programme countries to develop national targets and indicators for a post-2015 development agenda, and to adapt or **enhance existing national data and reporting systems**. Initiatives at the global and

regional levels to improve national statistical systems exist, such as Paris 21.

Governments should consider using information sharing, dialogues and learning forums as vehicles to engage civil society, the private sector, philanthropic foundations and other non-state actors. They should also be encouraged to promote open access to development cooperation information. This can assist in closing the gaps in information from these development actors.

Parliamentarians, civil society organizations and independent think tanks should collaborate and promote the collection and analysis of relevant information on development cooperation, and also stimulate demand for alternative analytical inputs on the part of governments and partners.

Table 1 Proposals to address changes and challenges in national monitoring and review of development cooperation post-2015

Enabler	Proposals
Political leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitize politicians to use available information • Involve politicians in design of MR&A frameworks
National DC policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All countries will need development cooperation policies that: link closely with broader sustainable development policies; reflect range of financing and MOI; bring actors together and reflect their roles; and have robust indicators and means to monitor • Engage non-state actors in their design early on • Recognize role of Members of Parliament • Engage private sector and philanthropy • Regularly review policies
Frameworks for monitoring targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use post-2015 development agenda as opportunity • Provide support to develop new or adapt existing frameworks • Conduct stakeholder consultations on design • Commit to including provider targets • Form part of national efforts to monitor the post-2015 development agenda
Effective institutional structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect mandate for forum in development cooperation policy • Establish system to follow-up on decisions • Invest in capacity to prepare, convene and follow-up to forums • Find creative ways to secure participation of all relevant actors • Include local governments
Data and information needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners to support: design of national targets / indicators for post-2015 development agenda; national data and reporting systems; and data analysis • Countries to improve tracking of commitments and results related to gender equality • Use learning forums to engage stakeholders and to close information gaps • Collaborate to promote data collection, including from non-official sources • Encourage peer or independent reviews of data and information systems • Promote open access to development cooperation information
Capacity development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to strengthen development cooperation coordination units in governments • Such units to provide guidance for line ministries and local authorities and establish communities of practice • Parliaments to invest in research and technical knowledge and visits • Partner countries to train their representatives

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