

## ***2020 DCF Survey Study: Toward effective development cooperation in the COVID-19 period*** **Note for Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) on key findings and proposals for action**

Early response efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic are generating lessons for developing countries, international development cooperation partners and other actors to improve the quality and impact of their support to national sustainable development priorities and recover better from the crisis. National experiences demonstrate how development cooperation can build resilience of developing countries to risks, by strengthening their capacities and supporting country systems.

Local and regional governments (LRGs) are not only implementers of the 2030 Agenda, they are also well placed to link the global goals to the needs and interests of local communities. Increased development cooperation, including development finance, at the LRG level can amplify their impact.

The 2020 DCF Survey Study<sup>1</sup> stresses the need for LRGs to boost their capacities and contributions to effective development cooperation: an essential ingredient for COVID-19 response and recovery. This note sets out the key LRG-related findings from the study, for further discussion and action.

### **I. Enablers of international development cooperation**

The DCF Survey provides developing countries with space to: i) reflect with their partners and stakeholders on the state of each of the five enablers at the national level; and ii) follow-up with practical actions to enhance the quality, impact and effectiveness of development cooperation.

<b>Key enablers of international development cooperation</b>			
<b>National development cooperation policy</b>	<b>Country results framework</b>	<b>Development cooperation information system</b>	<b>National development cooperation forum</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision</li> <li>• Priorities</li> <li>• Targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring targets</li> <li>• Long-term impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate, comprehensive, quality and timely data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-stakeholder dialogue</li> <li>• Review progress against targets</li> </ul>
<b>Capacity support</b>			

The 2020 Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) Survey Study found that many countries increasingly use the enablers of development cooperation as a set of tools for aligning international development cooperation to their national development priorities. The context-specific design and implementation of the enablers are improving national capacities, making progress on national sustainable development strategies, and responding to the early impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Multi-stakeholder approaches bolster many of the most successful efforts in deploying the enablers to these ends.

### **II. National development cooperation policies (NDCPs)**

NDCPs are firmly in place as essential components of the international development cooperation ecosystem. The majority of countries surveyed have adopted or updated their NDCP since 2016. The content of the policies increasingly reflects the diversity of development finance and other means of implementation required by the 2030 and Addis Agendas, which go beyond official development assistance (ODA) to include domestic resource mobilization, private finance, and South-South and triangular cooperation.

Countries that do not have NDCPs in place are encouraged to do so, as a clear part of national development plans. Moreover, provisions should be made for regular comprehensive reviews of the policy, which allow the

<sup>1</sup> The full 2020 survey study can be accessed [online here](#) and additional information on the DCF survey exercise can be [found here](#).

taking into account of significant changes in the national, regional or global contexts. NDCPs should also better reflect the challenge of key development risks and their implications for development cooperation. For example, numerous small island developing States have shown how climate and disaster risk reduction can be prioritized within their NDCPs, helping to shape collaboration with international development cooperation partners accordingly.

#### Findings and proposals for LRGs:

- NDCPs include a range of stakeholders from different sectors, different levels of government, and diverse international development cooperation partners. Most countries' NDCPs covered the inclusion and role of national government actors and international development cooperation partners in general, 94 per cent and 86 per cent, respectively. There is good coverage of LRGs, national NGOs, the private sector, multilateral organizations and multilateral development banks.
- When national actors were consulted in the design of NDCPs, they were likely to have targets in the NDCPs related to their role in development cooperation practices. For example, 67 per cent of countries reported that they had consulted LRGs in the design of NDCPs and 61 per cent of countries reported that their NDCPs contained targets for these actors.

### III. Country results frameworks (CRFs)

The results of the DCF Survey Study show improvements in the content of CRFs and their effective use in monitoring development cooperation. More than half of countries surveyed have CRFs in place, and they increasingly reflect targets for LRGs compared to previous years, as well as targets for individual development cooperation partners.

Most countries report that the monitoring of targets in their CRFs contributed to improved alignment between the activities of external partners and national priorities. Yet, several countries still do not have CRFs. They cite various reasons for this: the use of other development results frameworks in their planning; structural barriers; and limited capacities.

#### Findings and proposals for LRGs:

- CRFs increasingly reflect targets for LRGs compared to previous years, with 59 per cent of countries reporting targets for this level, compared to 41 per cent in 2018.
- Countries and LRGs require capacity support to operationalize and strengthen their results frameworks.

### IV. Development cooperation and information systems (DCIS)

DCIS are in place in most countries, helping to improve the transparency and management of development cooperation. Data quality remains a challenge, with nearly half of the surveyed countries reporting incomplete data from partners. While notable improvements have been made in expanding accessibility of DCIS, regular use by these stakeholders remains low in many instances.

Most DCIS currently in place track the 'basics' of development cooperation -- projected disbursements, progress on projects, on-budget flows and progress against targets. Few DCIS track progress on untied developments cooperation; the contribution of development cooperation to combatting inequalities; and gender-disaggregated expenditures and results.

#### Findings and proposals for LRGs:

- Access to development cooperation information has improved for a number of development cooperation actors and stakeholders, including national governments, LRGs and international development cooperation partners.

<sup>2</sup> Tied development cooperation is defined as "official grants or loans that limit procurement to companies in the donor country or in a small group of countries". Untying development cooperation, or removing those limitations, reduces transaction costs and improves ownership by recipient countries. Read more from the OECD [here](#).

- Only 33 per cent of countries used information sourced from LRGs. The lower usage of data from government ministries at national and subnational levels may be indicative of capacity challenges in these organizations. It may also reflect a lack of incentives or onerous reporting processes for submitting information to the national ministry responsible for the coordination of development cooperation.
- Survey respondents identified the need for capacity support to strengthen their DCIS. Strengthening capacities of government ministries and LRGs to generate quality and timely information can contribute greatly to enhanced country ownership and practical value of the DCIS.

## V. National development cooperation forums (NDCFs)

NDCFs are gradually assuming a multi-stakeholder character, but further effort is needed to make them more inclusive of non-state actors and to leverage actors' comparative strengths. NDCFs typically involve national ministries and international development cooperation partners, in particular OECD-DAC partners, multilateral organizations and multilateral development banks.

Engagement of the full spectrum of non-state actors in NDCFs is challenged by weak enabling environments for participation, lack of incentives for engagement and poor quality of consultation. These issues need to be urgently addressed given the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships to effective COVID-19 response and recovery.

### Findings and proposals for LRGs:

- There has been a positive shift in the extent to which LRGs are involved in NDCFs. In the 2019/2020 survey, 70 per cent of countries responded that this level of government was highly or moderately involved in NDCFs. Only 11 per cent of countries responded that LRGs were not involved at all, and 19 per cent responded that they were minimally involved in NDCFs (Figure 28). This contrasts favorably with the 2017/2018 survey, where 50 per cent of countries reported high or moderate involvement of LRGs in NDCFs, and 23 per cent were not involved at all.
- Ministries responsible for local government can enhance the engagement of LRGs in NDCFs by strengthening capacities for monitoring, evaluation and reporting on development cooperation at the local and regional levels, to also contribute to reporting through voluntary national reviews, which are national reports that capture progress of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and are presented at the global level at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).

## VI. Capacity support

Capacity support has strengthened the key enablers of effective development cooperation. Demand for further support will likely increase owing to challenges of the COVID-19 response and recovery. Countries have been receiving capacity support to strengthen all enablers, with the bulk channeled to DCIS and development cooperation units within national Governments. However, for all the enablers, capacity support remains limited for LRGs despite their growing contributions to implementing national sustainable development priorities.

## VII. Next steps

The virtual launch of the DCF Survey Study<sup>3</sup> in July 2020 has kicked off a series of DCF webinars to disseminate and dig still deeper into the findings of the study and emerging challenges of development cooperation in COVID-19 recovery. The series will engage parliaments and all stakeholders in the preparations for the Forum's next DCF High-level Meeting, to be held on 6-7 May 2021.

The DCF is a global multi-stakeholder platform which serves as the designated space within the United Nations to discuss trends, progress and frontier issues in international development cooperation toward achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Further information on the forthcoming work of the DCF is available on the [DCF website](#), and the DCF team is also available to answer any questions via email at [dcf@un.org](mailto:dcf@un.org).

<sup>3</sup> Find the video recording and summary of the interactive discussion, which engaged parliamentarians, of [the virtual launch here](#).