

2023 Development Cooperation Forum

Session I: Protecting lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable for more effective development

cooperation

Background Note

Purpose/Objective: Explore how countries are mobilizing development cooperation to navigate multiple crises simultaneously, with an eye towards reducing risk and building resilience of the most vulnerable.

Background¹

The current global context is characterized by complex, interconnected challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate emergency and a food-energy-finance crisis – all of which are affecting the lives and livelihoods of the world's most vulnerable people. Sixty percent of workers have lower real incomes than before the pandemic, and 60% of the poorest countries are distressed or at high risk of debt. The war in Ukraine has also had a widespread impact on food, energy, and finance across countries, with 1.6 billion people exposed to greater vulnerability. Despite efforts, international development cooperation is not addressing these challenges at the scale and speed required. Insufficient financing and coordination challenges have limited its potential. There is also a need for better alignment of development cooperation with efforts to reduce risk and address vulnerabilities.

Multi-dimensional vulnerability refers to the diverse vulnerabilities linked to epidemics, economic crises, natural disasters, and climate change, which impact sustainable development and expose systemic vulnerabilities at country and individual level. At the country level, country groups such as Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), as well as Middle Income Countries, all face certain structural vulnerabilities tied to economic, social and/or environmental factors. Countries and their development partners should assess critical vulnerabilities through their development cooperation. At the individual and group level (including but not limited to children, youth, women, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons, and migrants), multi-dimensional vulnerabilities are exacerbated by shocks and stressors which can weaken well-being. Development cooperation needs to better target these groups by addressing their rights, removing barriers, and serving to empower them to participate in policymaking and action.

The pandemic has highlighted the human and financial costs of under-investing in national and local capacities to reduce and manage risks and build resilience. As such, there is a need for a long-term outlook for risk-informed development cooperation to address multi-dimensional vulnerabilities effectively. Developing countries have identified the need for scaled up development cooperation to respond to large-scale and complex challenges, including through support to advanced data systems,² access to relevant knowledge and technologies, enhanced national and local adaptive capacities, more effective monitoring and evaluation, developing country-led coordination of development cooperation, and greater access to both emergency and longer-term concessional finance. Through building local and national capacities to

¹ For more information and data sources, please see the [Report of the Secretary-General: Trends and progress in international development cooperation \(E/2023/48\)](#) and [2022 Development Cooperation Forum \(DCF\) Survey Study: Navigating COVID-19 recovery and long-term risks](#).

² UNDESA, Financing for Sustainable Development Office, and International Aid Transparency Initiative. [Asia-Pacific regional workshop](#), “Strengthening policies, processes and data systems for effective development cooperation”, Bangkok, 2022.

adapt to complex global challenges, developing countries and their partners can more effectively address short-term needs arising from crises while advancing progress on long-term sustainable development objectives.

Guiding questions

- How are recent and ongoing crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, cost-of living challenges and climate emergency impacting on vulnerabilities of specific countries and groups of people?
- What are the key opportunities and challenges in adapting development cooperation policies and practices to address multi-dimensional vulnerabilities at country and group level?
- What are some of the current development cooperation approaches and innovations to addressing vulnerability in its multiple dimensions that are making positive impact?
- How are development cooperation partners working together to employ and adapt data and statistical measures, capacities and systems to navigate the risk landscape and better address vulnerabilities of special groups of countries and individuals?

Contact dcf@un.org for more information.