

Backgrounder on DCF

1. Why was the DCF set up, and by whom?

The UN General Assembly established the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) in resolution A/RES/60/1 on the outcome of the 2005 World Summit, requesting ECOSOC to “Hold a biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum to review trends in international development cooperation, including strategies, policies and financing, promote greater coherence among the development activities of different development partners and strengthen the links between the normative and operational work of the United Nations.”

2. What is the current mandate of the DCF and how has it evolved over time?

The evolution of the DCF mandate is captured in resolutions below:

2005: A/RES/60/1 World Summit Outcome	“Hold a biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum to review trends in international development cooperation, including strategies, policies and financing, promote greater coherence among the development activities of different development partners and strengthen the links between the normative and operational work of the United Nations;”
2007: A/RES/61/16 Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council	<p>3. Further decides that the biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum will be held within the framework of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, while stressing the need to preserve the distinct identity of the Forum so as to facilitate high-level participation, with a view to enhancing the implementation of international development cooperation issues affecting the realization of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and to promote dialogue to find effective ways to support it;</p> <p>4. Decides that the biennial Development Cooperation Forum will be held in alternate years in the framework of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council and that it should:</p> <p>(a) Review trends and progress in international development cooperation and give policy guidance and recommendations to promote more effective international development cooperation;</p> <p>(b) Identify gaps and obstacles with a view to making recommendations on practical measures and policy options to enhance coherence and effectiveness and to promote development cooperation for the realization of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;</p>

	(c) Provide a platform for Member States to exchange lessons learned and share experiences in formulating, supporting and implementing national development strategies;
2013: A/RES/68/1 Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council	The Development Cooperation Forum should continue to take into consideration the Istanbul Programme of Action when it reviews the trends in international development cooperation, as well as policy coherence for development.
2015: A/RES/69/313 Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development	We welcome continued efforts to improve the quality, impact and effectiveness of development cooperation and other international efforts in public finance, including adherence to agreed development cooperation effectiveness principles. We will align activities with national priorities, including by reducing fragmentation, accelerating the untying of aid, particularly for least developed countries and countries most in need. We will promote country ownership and results orientation and strengthen country systems, use programme-based approaches where appropriate, strengthen partnerships for development, reduce transaction costs and increase transparency and mutual accountability. We will make development more effective and predictable by providing developing countries with regular and timely indicative information on planned support in the medium term. We will pursue these efforts in the Development Cooperation Forum of the Economic and Social Council, and, in this regard, we also take account of efforts in other relevant forums, such as the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, in a complementary manner.
2021: A/75/L.101 Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council	The Development Cooperation Forum will continue to be convened every two years before the forum on financing for development follow-up, with the next forum to be convened in 2023.
2022: A/RES/76/258 Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries	The Development Cooperation Forum should continue to review trends in international development cooperation, as well as policy coherence for development, including for least developed countries and graduated countries.

3. What is the governance of the DCF and how has it evolved over time?

The DCF is a multi-stakeholder forum engaging all relevant actors of international development cooperation, mandated by the General Assembly as a core function of ECOSOC. The agenda and programme of work for the DCF meetings are set by the President of ECOSOC in consultation with the ECOSOC Bureau. The outcome of the DCF meetings takes the form of a President's Summary, a

mandated input to the ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum and the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).

4. What are the ‘ways of working’ of the DCF and how have these evolved over time?

The DCF operates through several mechanisms:

- **Biennial high-level meetings:** i.e., the formal meetings of DCF as global multi-stakeholder forum of ECOSOC.
- **Surveys and studies:** notably the DCF biennial survey since 2009 that gathers data on country experiences, practices, and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of international development cooperation in supporting country efforts to achieve their national sustainable development priorities, supporting evidence-based policy discussions.
- **DCF symposiums:** for much of the DCF history, regional and global DCF high-level symposiums have been a key part of the preparatory process, providing space for in-depth multi-stakeholder discussions and consultation across different regions.
- **Capacity development:** since around 2020, the DCF has increasingly incorporated capacity development efforts, supporting Member States and stakeholders to apply the evidence and recommendations emerging from DCF processes.
- **SG Report:** the preparation of the Secretary-General’s analytical report on trends and progress in international development cooperation involves extensive inter-agency and multi-stakeholder coordination engagement with UN system entities and external stakeholders, providing the basis for DCF discussions, including action-oriented recommendations for consideration by the Forum.
- **Stakeholder engagement mechanisms,** including formal and informal channels to engage Member States, civil society, and other actors. Over time this has included a DCF Advisory Group (used to shape the two-year preparatory strategy), a dedicated CSO Reference Group, and ongoing outreach to stakeholders across the UN system and beyond.

5. When/Why/How were the ‘enablers’ identified?

The enablers of effective development cooperation were identified early on through the first rounds of the DCF Survey and discussions at the DCF’s high-level meetings. The **2016 DCF Survey** introduced a more streamlined and structured presentation of five key enablers —National Development Cooperation Policies (NDCPs), Country Results Frameworks (CRFs), Development Cooperation Information Systems (DCIS), and National Development Cooperation Forums (NDCFfs), and capacity support. Recognized as essential tools for improving the effectiveness, quality, and impact of development cooperation, the enablers emerged through surveys as countries articulated practical requirements for effective coordination, monitoring, and mutual accountability mechanisms for development cooperation.

The DCF Survey

1. When did the DCF Survey begin and what was the rationale for setting it up?

The idea of the DCF Survey was first discussed during the first High-Level Symposium of the Development Cooperation Forum held in Vienna in 2007, which focused on country-level experiences in coordinating and managing development cooperation. This initial symposium identified mutual accountability between developing and developed countries as a cornerstone of the development agenda, emphasizing the need for improved monitoring of aid quality and effectiveness.

During its first 2007–2008 cycle, the DCF built a strong reputation for independent analysis and promoting balanced, multi-stakeholder dialogue on development cooperation. Key messages from the first ministerial-level DCF in 2008, as well as the DCF's contributions to international debates, were reflected in the outcome documents of the Accra High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (September 2008) and the Doha Review Conference on Financing for Development (November–December 2008).

Building on these foundational discussions, the first of the biennial DCF Survey exercises culminated in November 2009 in the publication of the report, [*Enhancing Mutual Accountability and Transparency in Development Cooperation*](#), which established a systematic approach to assess mutual accountability mechanisms and promote the voice of developing countries in development cooperation debates.

The rationale for setting up the DCF Survey was to provide robust evidence on the effectiveness of development cooperation on the ground. It aimed to capture confidential and candid country inputs that could feed directly into UN-led intergovernmental processes, including the HLPF, the ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development, and the DCF itself. The Survey was designed to generate practical recommendations for policymakers and practitioners, while fostering more candid dialogue, strengthening coordination, and improving transparency in international development cooperation.

2. What is the primary aim of the survey today?

The primary aim of the Survey is to collect high-quality, firsthand data from government officials and practitioners in developing countries on the effectiveness of international development cooperation on the ground. By ensuring confidentiality, the Survey creates a safe space for sharing candid insights and challenges. This enables the generation of reliable evidence that reflects the realities of partner countries —promoting a holistic, resilient, and forward-looking approach to high-impact development cooperation in all its forms that is aligned with the needs and priorities of developing countries.

Specifically, the Survey seeks to:

- Provide evidence-based inputs for intergovernmental deliberations, particularly for the DCF high-level meeting and the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4).
- Support national mechanisms for accountability, improve the quality, impact, and effectiveness of development cooperation, including for integrated national financing frameworks (INFFs).
- Examine and strengthen key enablers of effective development cooperation, such as national policies, results frameworks, coordination forums, information systems, and capacity support.

3. What is the scope of the DCF Survey (topics-wise and respondents-wise)?

Topics-wise, the DCF Survey examines the effectiveness of international development cooperation through a structured assessment of five key enablers that have emerged as central over time based on survey participants: national development cooperation policies (NDCPs), country-driven results frameworks (CRFs), national development cooperation forums (NDCFs), development cooperation information systems (DCIS), and capacity support. It also addresses integrated and resilient approaches to development cooperation that consider the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The Survey explores linkages to domestic resource mobilization and the full range of means of implementation, private and blended forms of development cooperation, capacity support for multi-stakeholder engagement, and collective action for policy change. It focuses on capturing the quality, impact, and effectiveness of development cooperation across financial, non-financial, technical, and partnership modalities.

Respondents-wise, the Survey is open to all developing countries. Governments are encouraged to coordinate across ministries and engage a broad range of domestic actors, including parliamentarians, local and regional authorities, civil society organizations, and beneficiaries. They are also invited to consult with international development cooperation partners to provide a comprehensive and inclusive response. The Survey process emphasizes participatory engagement to ensure that national perspectives are enriched by contributions from multiple stakeholders, strengthening ownership, transparency, and accountability in the management of development cooperation.

4. How resource-intensive is the exercise?

The time and effort to fill out the survey can vary, particularly depending on whether inter-agency or inter-ministerial consultations are held. In addition, some respondents prefer to schedule a meeting or engage in a few exchanges with DESA beforehand to clarify expectations and requirements. Once all necessary information has been collected, filling out the Survey itself should take no more than 2–3 hours. Beyond the written submission, many respondents also choose to organize follow-up workshops (lasting 2–3 hours) to discuss and validate their findings.

5. What is the follow-up process to findings from the DCF Survey?

Survey findings feed directly into high-level DCF high-level meetings and related UN dialogues. They also inform specific capacity-building interventions, technical support, and development of practical policy recommendations. Countries use these findings to improve their development cooperation policies, strategies, and coordination and information systems. For example, the findings have supported the formulation and refinement of Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) and related planning tools. They have also contributed to national policy development processes, including the design of National Development Cooperation Policies (NDCPs). Moreover, the DCF Survey findings inform the annual Financing for Sustainable Development Report and the outcome document of the annual Financing for Development Forum. This year, the findings also serve as inputs to FFD4.

6. How does DCF Survey assess the quality, impact, and effectiveness of international development cooperation?

The DCF Survey focuses on the developing country perspectives regarding enablers for high impact and high-quality international development cooperation. Results are anonymized in presenting the global findings.

Methodology:

The DCF Survey uses aggregated, qualitative data to assess the five DCF enablers of effective development cooperation. Survey respondents receive a detailed country profile presenting their responses alongside global and group findings (e.g., LDCs) and policy recommendations.

Participation and Inclusivity:

The DCF itself is an ECOSOC Forum open to all UN Member States and relevant stakeholders, with the DCF Survey undertaken by developing country Member States on a voluntary basis.

7. What are the main differences between the DCF Survey and the GPEDC monitoring exercise?

The DCF Survey differs from the GPEDC monitoring exercise in its mandate, methodology, and target countries.

On mandate, the DCF takes a qualitative, country-driven narrative approach centered on five enablers of effective development cooperation. It emphasizes developing country perspectives and offers tailored policy insights. In contrast, the GPEDC applies a quantitative, indicator-based framework to assess adherence to four effectiveness principles.

On methodology, the DCF survey ensures full confidentiality of respondents aiming to foster open and candid inputs. While individual country profiles are shared confidentially with respondents for internal use and follow-up, including to Voluntary National Reviews undertaken in conjunction with the HLPF, aggregate results are published anonymously to uphold confidentiality and encourage candid responses. DCF data is used solely to inform intergovernmental dialogue and support

actionable, evidence-based policymaking—not to evaluate performance or influence access to funding. The GPEDC publishes country-level data and allows flexible indicator selection.

The DCF Survey is administered to developing countries and disseminated through respective UN missions, targeting relevant ministries. The DCF, embedded in a universal UN platform, is open to all Member States and relevant stakeholders, whereas GPEDC participation is voluntary and led by a smaller subset of partner countries and development actors.

8. What is the future outlook for the DCF?

The Development Cooperation Forum is the only global platform on international development cooperation that brings together all countries—traditional donors, emerging providers, and other developing countries—on equal footing to address the full breadth of international development cooperation. As a core intergovernmental platform under ECOSOC, the DCF can play a crucial role in the intergovernmental follow-up to FFD4 and in strengthening the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The DCF goes beyond effectiveness to help countries navigate and adapt to major shifts in the global development landscape, using development cooperation more strategically to advance global, regional, and national sustainable development priorities. Established by the General Assembly with an evolving mandate, the DCF brings vital ground-level evidence to political discussions.

As the global development landscape evolves, the DCF provides a unique space for policy coherence, evidence-based dialogue, and mutual learning that strengthens country ownership and inclusive partnerships. While maintaining a light footprint for Member States and stakeholders, it generates practical insights and mobilizes action through its meetings and related activities, complemented by the DCF Survey focused on the enablers of high-quality and high-impact development cooperation.