

2025 Development Cooperation Forum Survey Study

Time to Change: Realigning International Development Cooperation with Developing Countries' Needs and Priorities amid Rising Global Pressures



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



**Development
Cooperation** forum



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**United
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Abbreviations

AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda
CRF	Country Results Framework
DCF	Development Cooperation Forum
DCIS	Development cooperation information systems
DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
FfD4	Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development
FSD	Financing for Sustainable Development
HIC	High-income country
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LLDCs	Landlocked Developing Countries
LIC	Low-income country
MDBs	Multilateral Development Banks
MICs	Middle-income countries
NDB	National Development Banks
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDCF	National development cooperation forum
NDCP	National development cooperation policy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States

Glossary

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda)	The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to tackle 17 Sustainable Development Goals which include ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, combating climate change, and achieving gender equality, as well as financing and other means of implementation. A successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the agenda was formally adopted in 2015.
Concessionality	Degree to which loans are extended on terms more generous than market loans either through lower interest rates or longer-term periods, or a combination.
Country results framework (CRF)	CRFs are a tool used by countries to assess the contribution of international development cooperation to national sustainable development results. Countries can improve mutual accountability and transparency using CRFs. Results are typically defined through indicators, which are often, but not always, quantifiable and measurable and can include targets expected for the achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts over different intervals of time. Some countries may have CRFs incorporated within their National Development Cooperation Policy or similar strategy document.
Development cooperation	The Development Cooperation Forum has adopted a working definition of development cooperation as “an activity that explicitly aims to support national or international development priorities, not mainly driven by profit, discriminates in favour of developing countries and is based on cooperative relationships that seek to enhance developing country ownership.” This includes financial transfers, capacity support, technology development and transfer, cooperative action to drive policy change at the global, regional, national and local levels, and multi-stakeholder partnerships.
Development cooperation information systems (DCIS)	DCIS are systems that can be used to track information related to international development cooperation (e.g. Development Assistance Databases, Aid Information Management Platforms or other mechanisms). Effective development cooperation is supported by information that is accurate, comprehensive and timely in reflecting disbursement, allocation, use and monitoring and evaluation of international development cooperation. ¹
International development cooperation partners	This term refers to all external/international development cooperation partners, both governmental and non-governmental, multilateral and bilateral, and may include OECD-DAC countries, Southern partners and other non-OECD-DAC countries, international organizations, development banks, private sector organizations, foundations, non-governmental and civil society organizations, philanthropies, representatives of academia, research and policy think tanks.
Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF)	An integrated national financing framework (INFF) can be understood as a system of policies and institutional structures that can help governments develop and deliver a strategic, holistic approach toward managing financing for nationally owned sustainable development strategies. Such frameworks were called for in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. There are four main building blocks for the design and operationalisation of INFFs: i) assessment and diagnostics; ii) financing strategy; iii) monitoring, review and accountability and iv) governance and coordination. ²
International development cooperation partners	This term refers to all external/international development cooperation partners, both governmental and non-governmental, and may include OECD-DAC countries, Southern partners and other non-OECD-DAC countries, private sector organizations, foundations, non-governmental and civil society organizations, philanthropies, representatives of academia, research and policy think tanks.
Monitoring	Continuous examination of progress achieved during the implementation of an undertaking to track progress against targets and plans, and to take necessary decisions to improve performance. ³

Glossary (continued)

Mutual accountability	Mutual accountability (MA) is defined as “...accountability between the providers and recipients of development cooperation, for effectiveness of that cooperation in producing development results.” ⁴ It addresses imbalances in the relationship between developing countries and international development cooperation partners and serves as a driver for mutual learning and knowledge sharing.
National development cooperation forum (NDCF)	National Development Cooperation Forums (NDCFs) provide a government-led platform for international development cooperation actors and domestic stakeholders to discuss issues, review progress and engage in mutual learning for more effective development cooperation.
National development cooperation policy (NDCP)	NDCPs define what effective development cooperation means in each country context among development cooperation actors. The NDCP articulates a country’s vision, priorities and the activities related to international development cooperation as well as the division of labour among all relevant actors. An NDCP can either be a stand-alone document or part of a national action plan, sustainable development strategy, or an integrated national financing framework (INFF). When presented as a separate document, it is typically called an “aid policy,” “development assistance policy,” “partnership strategy,” or a similar term.
National sustainable development strategy (NSDS)	A national sustainable development strategy, sometimes referred to as a national sustainable development plan, sets out the economic, social and environmental priorities of the country for the medium-to-long-term. It usually outlines the vision the country has set for itself and the roles and responsibilities of the state and non-state actors in the implementation of the strategy. The national sustainable development strategy may also include the identification of resources and other means of implementation.
OECD-DAC partners	The OECD Development Assistance Committee currently has 32 members: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, The Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lithuania, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, The Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States.
Private sector	The private sector refers to for-profit domestic and international organizations. This can include small, medium and large enterprises, business associations, chamber of commerce and multinational corporations.
Review	An assessment of performance or progress of a programme or institution. Reviews tend to focus on operational issues and can be ad hoc or regular (e.g. annual). Reviews can take the form of independent reviews or self-assessments. They can range from highly to loosely structured and typically do not apply the rigor of evaluations.
Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)	VNRs are a national review process which aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and institutions of governments and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy. These national reviews serve as a basis for the regular reviews by High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), meeting under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council. Regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and involve multiple stakeholders.

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Executive summary

“The purpose of development cooperation is to accelerate the development of developing countries in the three dimensions of sustainable development, through the availability of development finance, access to technology and capacity building in technological fields and innovation, and knowledge transfer/sharing in development-related areas, leading to positive structural impacts.” – Lower middle-income country from the Latin America and Caribbean region.

International development cooperation is at a turning point. Over the past decade, economic turbulence, shifting geopolitical dynamics, the escalating climate crisis, recent cuts in ODA by some major donors and evolving global priorities have reshaped the development cooperation landscape. In this context, the 2024/2025 Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) survey provides an in-depth analysis of how developing countries are navigating these changes, leveraging key enablers, and redefining partnerships to drive their sustainable development agendas forward.

Developing countries have taken greater ownership of their development cooperation policies and strategies, yet they continue to face significant obstacles, including a lack of predictable and sufficient financing, challenges in aligning development cooperation with national needs and priorities, and overly complex bureaucratic procedures that hinder effective implementation. While the volume of official development assistance (ODA) continues to fall short of long-standing commitments, there has been a notable emphasis on innovative financing mechanisms such as green bonds, blue bonds, debt swaps and blended finance. However, access to these mechanisms remains restricted to countries with the necessary institutional capacity, limiting broader uptake.

Increasingly fragmented international development cooperation, global crises and emerging risks challenge developing countries in making progress. Developing countries raise concerns about the increasing fragmentation of international development cooperation. The lack of coordination among development partners results in overlapping initiatives, duplication of efforts, and inefficient use of resources. Concerns raised by developing countries also include the prioritising of responses to emerging crises and humanitarian situations over long-term development

needs, and development partners not keeping to long-standing commitments. Coordination of development cooperation at country-level, though improving, also remains a challenge for developing countries faced with overlapping or duplication of projects, and diversity in compliance and reporting requirements from different development partners and the United Nations system.

The modalities of development cooperation have had a profound impact on the quality and effectiveness of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs contributed to an increased diversity of development cooperation modalities, instruments and partnerships leading to new opportunities and challenges. South-South and Triangular Cooperation, particularly in areas of climate action, renewable energy and innovative finance, continues to increase importance in the development cooperation portfolio. However, low-income and lower middle-income countries identified the need for institutional capacity including SSCT policy frameworks and capacity to secure favourable terms in SSCT agreements, as well as other agreements. At the same time, developing countries have expressed concern about the decline in grants and increase in the use of loans to finance development.

Developing countries call for updating the international development cooperation architecture, including reforming the governance of global institutions to be more inclusive, addressing concerns about debt sustainability, and measures to ensure accountability of developed countries to meet commitments. They expect the **United Nations to play a more decisive role in bringing greater coherence and effectiveness to international development cooperation.** While developing countries continue to see the relevance of principles of effective development cooperation – such as country ownership, focus on results, inclusive partnerships, transparency and mutual accountability – they called for updating principles to reflect changes in the global environment and for ensuring consistent adherence to principles of high quality and high impact development cooperation.

Access to climate finance remains a major challenge, with many developing countries struggling to secure funding due to overly complex application procedures, fragmented funding sources, and inflexible financing terms. Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), despite being disproportionately affected by climate change, encounter the greatest barriers in obtaining climate finance. The survey underscores the pressing need to streamline access to climate finance and ensure that funding mechanisms are better tailored to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of developing countries.

A key insight from the survey is the critical role of enablers of effective development cooperation.

Countries that have robust and well-articulated **National Development Cooperation Policies (NDCPs)** experience greater success in aligning donor support with national priorities, fostering mutual accountability, and optimizing resource allocation. However, significant gaps remain, particularly in ensuring that NDCPs address key aspects such as untying aid, reducing transaction costs, and enhancing the quality and impact of blended finance arrangements. Given the increasing significance of climate finance, NDCPs must also strengthen their links to climate finance, including NDCs.

Country Results Frameworks (CRFs) and Development Cooperation Information Systems (DCIS) are proving to be essential tools for improving transparency and accountability of all stakeholders involved. Yet, many developing countries lack the necessary technical expertise and financial resources to fully operationalize these systems, with partners often not providing the requested data and information needed. Strengthening data availability, monitoring,

policy coherence, and institutional capacity in data management remain key priorities.

Developing countries are positive about the overall effectiveness of National Development Cooperation Forums (NDCF) or partnership platforms, but there is scope for strengthening these platforms by making them more inclusive of non-state actors and improving the levels of participation of international development cooperation partners, including non-traditional partners.

The survey's findings provide a strong and urgent call to action: if international development cooperation is to be genuinely transformative, global development partners must go beyond rhetoric and honor their commitments with greater predictability, flexibility, and responsiveness to the needs and priorities of developing countries. The upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development presents a crucial opportunity to revitalize global commitments, recalibrate the development finance architecture, and ensure that international development cooperation is fully fit for purpose in an era of accelerating global challenges.

As the world approaches a critical juncture in delivering the 2030 Agenda, the future of high-quality and high-impact development cooperation will depend on more transparent and inclusive partnerships, stronger policy coherence and coordination at all levels, and a concerted effort to place developing countries' needs and priorities at the forefront of the global agenda.





1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) of the United Nations Economic and Social Council plays a critical role in reflecting on the quality, impact and effectiveness of international development cooperation and facilitating dialogue on adapting it to a changing global environment, evolving country needs and priorities and emerging vulnerabilities. Since 2009, the DCF biennial survey studies have built empirical evidence and understanding to advance mutual learning among Member States and relevant stakeholders. These voluntary DCF surveys help governments to assess how effectively development cooperation works in support of their national sustainable development strategies. As the survey results are anonymous, they stimulate and focus frank reflection and dialogue between governments of developing countries, international development cooperation partners and stakeholders.

The 2025 DCF survey study is the eighth study conducted since 2009 and takes place nearly 10 years since the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The data and findings presented in this DCF Survey Study played a key role in informing the 2025 Development Cooperation Forum, convened by the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on 12–13 March 2025. It will also contribute to the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) in Spain, 30 June–3 July 2025 and ongoing efforts to make international development cooperation fit for purpose for today's challenges and advance necessary reforms in both national and international development cooperation policies and practices.

The 2025 DCF Survey Study sought to respond to the following key questions:

1. What is the extent of progress in enhancing the effectiveness and coherence of international development cooperation in supporting developing countries' national sustainable development strategies?
2. What do developing countries see as the key challenges and emerging issues at global and country levels that affect the quality, effectiveness and impact of international development cooperation in supporting their national sustainable development strategies?
3. What should be done practically to strengthen international development cooperation at the country level and at the global level?
4. What changes or improvements to the existing enablers of effective development cooperation at the country level can ensure their relevance in the changing context of international development cooperation? Should these key enablers be recalibrated and/or new enablers added to the international development cooperation toolbox?

1.2 Enablers of effective development cooperation

The key enablers of effective development cooperation at the country level are a set of tools developing countries can use to enhance the quality, effectiveness and impact of development cooperation. These enablers are not prescriptive: developing countries use and adapt them flexibly to their country contexts. They entail a policy setting out a vision, priorities and targets for development cooperation; a framework for measuring results of development cooperation; an information system for tracking progress and reporting on development cooperation; and forums/coordination mechanisms at which governments and stakeholders discuss progress and their respective needs. (Figure 1). Capacity support for strengthening these policies, results frameworks, information systems and forums is a cross-cutting enabler of effective development cooperation.

The key enablers are interrelated and mutually rein-

forcing. National development cooperation policies (NDCPs) provide the foundation for the other key enablers, while Country results frameworks (CRFs) set out in detail how the effectiveness and impact of development cooperation will be monitored and evaluated. Development cooperation information systems (DCIS) enable the collection, analysis and reporting on development cooperation targets set out in the NDCP and CRF. The information from the DCIS serves to inform the multi-stakeholder dialogues of national development cooperation forums (NDCFs), promoting transparency and mutual accountability. NDCFs, in addition to reviewing progress, are also valuable platforms for mutual learning and alignment of development cooperation with priorities set out in NDCPs.

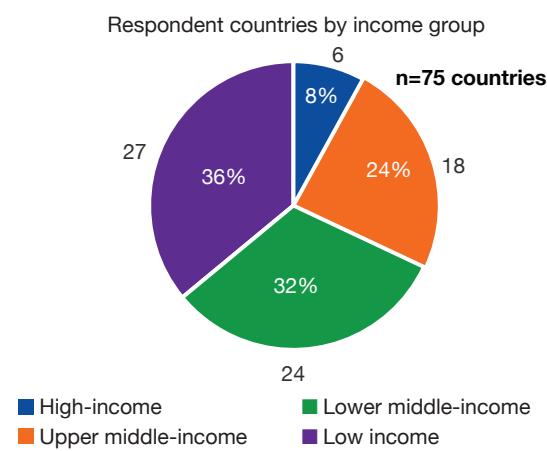
These enablers can also serve as building blocks in designing and implementing integrated national financing frameworks (INFFs) for mobilization and management of resources to achieve national sustainable development strategies.

Figure 1: Key enablers of effective development cooperation
1.3 Methodology of the 2024 survey

National development cooperation policies	Country results frameworks	Development cooperation information systems	National development Cooperation forums
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Priorities • Targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring targets • Long-term impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate, comprehensive, quality and timely data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-stakeholder dialogue • Review progress against targets
Capacity support for strengthening enablers			

The 2024/2025 DCF survey launched in early 2024 for a six-month period and was the primary data source for the study. **Seventy-five developing countries responded to the survey, the highest number of respondent countries since the inception of the survey in 2009.** Using the World Bank classification, 30 countries were low-income countries, 24 were lower middle-income countries, 18 were upper middle-income countries and 6 were high-income countries (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Participation of countries by income group: 2024/2025



Using the United Nations classification, 30 of 44 Least Developed Countries (68.1 per cent), 16 of 32 Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) (50 per cent), and 17 of 39 Small Island Developing States (43.6 per cent) participated in the survey. Consistent with previous DCF surveys, the Africa region accounted for the highest proportion of respondents in 2024 (Table 1), though this was lower than the 57 per cent representation in the 2015/2016 survey.” The 30 African participant countries represent 55.5 per cent of the 54 countries of the African continent.

The survey data was complemented by 28 interviews with countries that volunteered to be interviewed (Table 1). The interviews explored what was working well in development cooperation practice at country level, key challenges experienced, and how development cooperation could be made more effective and beneficial for developing countries. Ten of the interviewed countries were upper middle-income countries, nine were lower middle-income countries, seven were low-income countries, and two were high-income countries. Ten SIDS participated in the interviews.

Table 1: Participation of countries in survey and interviews by region: 2024/2025

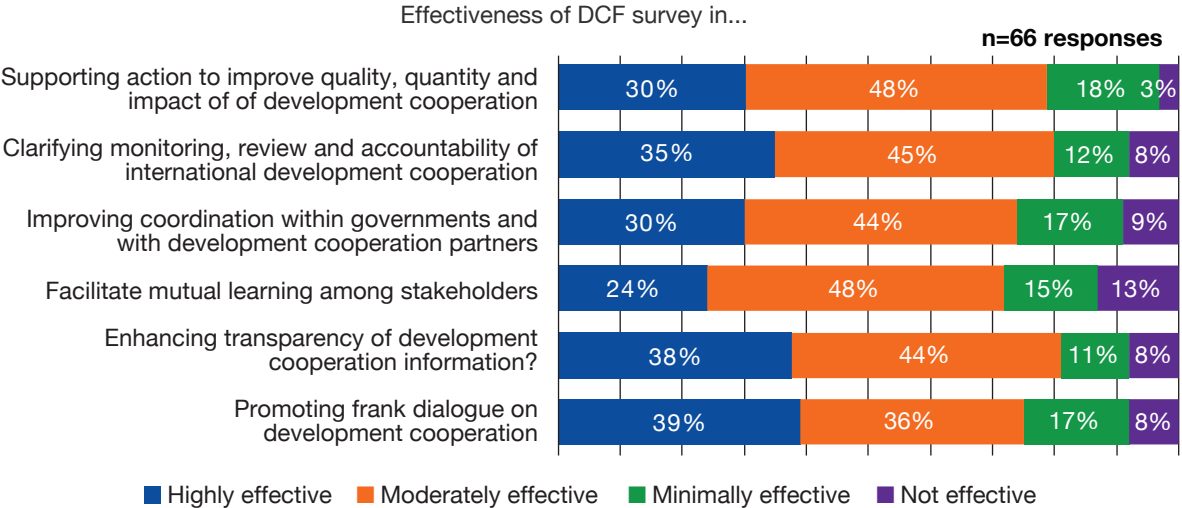
Region	Number of countries that participated in the survey	Number of countries that participated in interviews
Africa	30 (40%)	12 (43%)
Asia-Pacific	24 (32%)	9 (32%)
Eastern Europe	4 (5%)	—
Latin America and Caribbean	17 (23%)	7 (25%)
Total	75 (100%)	28 (100%)

Most countries participating in the 2024/2025 DCF survey viewed the survey as highly effective or moderately effective in enhancing transparency of development cooperation information (82 per cent of countries), clarifying the monitoring, review and accountability of international development cooperation (80 per cent), supporting action to improve the quality, quantity and impact of development cooperation (78 per cent) and promoting frank dialogue on development cooperation (75 per cent). (Figure 3).

1.4 Study limitations

Participation in the DCF survey and the interviews is voluntary. The results reflect the views and experiences of respondent countries and cannot be easily generalized to the entire population of developing countries. UNDESA followed up with countries to ensure a broadly representative distribution of countries from the four regions and a diversity of countries in terms of income group and other categories.

Figure 3: Respondent countries' views on effectiveness of DCF survey: 2024/2025





2.0 Global trends in international development cooperation since 2015: perspectives of developing countries

This chapter discusses the international development cooperation context from the perspective of the developing countries that participated in the 2024/2025 DCF survey. It draws primarily on the Survey responses of 75 developing countries and in-depth interviews with 28 of them on the changes they have observed in the international development cooperation landscape, how these changes have impacted on development cooperation at the national level, and on how international development cooperation policies and practices could be improved.

2.1 A sea of change in international development cooperation: the impact of the 2030 Agenda

- **Alignment of international development cooperation with national priorities.** Countries interviewed in the study viewed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a transformative framework that has enhanced the relevance and effectiveness of development cooperation. They reported successful integration of the SDGs into their national development plans and national development cooperation policies. One country commented that “*The SDGs have made a definitive impact on the country’s development cooperation...and is the only avenue by which*

Box 2: Innovative financing mechanisms used by interviewed countries: 2024/2025

A lower middle-income in the Africa region: In 2023, issued a three-year sustainability bond, with partial credit guarantees from two multilateral development banks. The bonds are issued in a third country allowing to access the growing debt capital market there. The bond will be used to finance inclusive growth and green objectives under the country’s Sovereign Sustainable Financing Framework. The country plans to expand the introduction of sustainability-related bonds, including, for example, women empowerment bonds.

An upper middle-income country in the LAC region is expanding into sustainable financing, including green bonds and blue bonds. The country has received support from UNDP and multilateral development banks in building a sustainable finance market.

A high-income SIDS issued sovereign blue bonds to raise capital from investors to finance marine and ocean-based initiatives that will have positive environmental, economic and social benefits. The blue bond has been in place for five years and is providing lessons for other countries.

Debt swaps: Three respondent countries (two SIDS and one lower middle-income) reported that they engaged in debt swaps for climate/nature – agreements that allow them to reallocate a portion of current debt towards investments in climate action. These debt swap programmes have been developed with bilateral development partners, traditional and non-traditional. The debt swap illustrated by one of the countries converted part of the debt into local currency and was used for implementing projects that are priority for the government and the development partner, for example, energy transition.

Islamic financing: One respondent country (low-income - Africa region) has used Islamic financing leveraging ‘Zakat’ (Islamic obligation for individuals to donate part of their wealth to charitable causes) for development.

Another country (lower middle-income – Asia-Pacific region) is considering leveraging ‘Zakat’ for development projects.

alignment of all frameworks to which commitments to implementation are made can be ensured.”

- **Strengthened partnerships.** Respondent countries commented that the 2030 Agenda encouraged multi-stakeholder partnerships, fostering collaboration between government, civil society and the private sector. While these partnerships helped leverage additional resources and expertise, countries also emphasized that funding continues to fall far short of needs.
- **Emphasis on data and monitoring.** The SDG targets have sharpened attention and focus on developing country-level targets and indicators. For example, countries have revised the indicators in their National Development Cooperation Policies (NDCPs) to be more target-orientated and better aligned with the SDG indicators.
- **Introducing innovative financing mechanisms.** Some developing countries are introducing innovative financing mechanisms to mobilize resources but need more capacity support to do so. Box 2 provides some examples.

2.2 Impact of global trends on international development cooperation

Global political and economic challenges have negatively affected the volume and predictability of ODA. A common message from developing countries was that major global events were having a profound effect on development cooperation. They identified the wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East that “in their view” have reduced the fiscal space of their traditional development partners. Developing countries also pointed to the downturn in the global economy as another factor impacting negatively on the volume and predictability of ODA. They perceived development partner priorities as increasingly shaped by geopolitical considerations rather than the development needs and priorities of developing countries.

Crises and humanitarian responses are increasingly prioritised over countries’ long-term development needs and priorities. Developing countries recognized the need for international development cooperation to respond quickly to emerging crises and humanitarian situations, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic. They believed, however, that with the increasing number of crises, less ODA is available to support more traditional but no less urgent sustainable development priorities and related programmes aimed at lifting people out of poverty.

Development partners are not keeping to long-standing commitments. Countries expressed concern that development partners were not meeting

Box 1: Developing country views on donors not meeting commitments

Lower middle-income country in the Africa region: “Developed countries may not be in a position anymore to fulfil their commitments. If they are not feasible, what are the new commitments that they can make and know that they can actually live with and deliver? This discussion on alternative scenarios needs to take place.”

Upper middle-income country in the Latin America and Caribbean region “There should be like a seal of quality to ensure that existing donor commitments in terms of volume, targets and resource allocation are better met and measured. If a country reaches the 0.7% for example, they receive this seal of quality. There should be an international qualification, something that pushes them, that encourages donors to fulfil their commitments, especially in financial terms. There is a huge gap between what development partners say they are going to do and what they actually do - maybe in the framework of the DAC statistics an index could be agreed upon and if you don’t exceed a certain percentage, worst case you can even get fined.”

their commitment to 0.7 per cent of GNI to ODA, widening the development financing gap. Countries had different views on how the issue of unfulfilled commitments should be resolved and suggested that this should be the subject for discussion at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development.

2.3 A call for scaling up and simplifying access to climate finance

Access to climate finance remains insufficient to address mitigation and adaptation needs.

Developing countries face multifaceted challenges due to climate change and other environmental degradation, significantly impacting their economies, ecosystems, and social structures. These challenges are shaped by their economic constraints, reliance on climate-sensitive sectors, and limited institutional capacity to respond to evolving climate threats. Small Island Developing States (SIDS), for example, are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, including rising sea levels, extreme weather events and resource scarcity.

The countries interviewed are trying to tap into climate finance through international funds, for example the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund, the Global Environment Facility and concessional loans and grants from the World Bank and regional banks. They also access finance through innovative financing mechanisms, for example, green bonds, blue bonds, debt swaps and blended finance.

However, countries reported the following major challenges in accessing climate finance:

1. *Complex financing mechanisms*: Navigating international climate finance mechanisms can be cumbersome due to their complex application and approval processes. The requirements for accessing international funds often necessitate robust project preparations, technical expertise and institutional coordination. Developing countries often lack sufficient technical expertise, human resources and simply time to gather the extensive necessary information and prepare applications to these funds.
2. *Coordination and fragmentation of funding*: Developing countries noted the multiplicity of climate financing mechanism: in addition to international funds, bilateral development partners also funded climate-related projects. Coordinating these multiple funding sources is challenging for countries, especially those with limited institutional capacity, and there is a risk of duplication and difficulties in aligning various funding sources with national priorities.
3. *Lack of flexibility*: SIDS commented that international funds did not sufficiently consider their high vulnerability to climate change, limited financial resources and particular challenges they face in leveraging private sector investments due to their small size and economic constraints.
4. *Institutional capacity for implementation, monitoring and review*: Even when funds were available, countries noted that they often lacked adequate capacity to channel and manage funds, resulting in delayed project implementation and suboptimal utilization of available resources. Monitoring and reporting requirements for climate finance were seen as resource-intensive and not always well suited to the capabilities of developing countries.

Lower middle-income/SIDS in the Asia-Pacific region: “One of the ongoing challenges is ensuring that development partners and UN agencies coordinate through the Ministry of Finance rather than approaching line ministries directly. Despite an established system for coordinating all development projects, there are still cases where partners engage ministries independently, which can lead to duplication of efforts and misalignment with national priorities. This has been a significant issue over the past decade.”

2.4 Coordination of development cooperation

There is fragmentation in support from development partners who often pursue separate agendas, sometimes resulting in overlapping or under-funding of projects and inefficient use of resources. The variation in compliance, reporting and monitoring practices among development partners can overwhelm countries with limited capacity for such activity. The tendency of development partners to bypass the central coordinating ministry and deal directly with line/sector ministries was also raised as a major challenge to effective coordination and optimal resource use.

The United Nations plays a significant role at the country level in coordinating support to developing countries. Coordination is improving, yet there is scope for further progress. Countries commented on the United Nations use of its convening powers to assist them in bringing together governments, development partners and other stakeholders. This, in their view, contributes to a more collaborative environment among all actors and beneficiaries. Institutional frameworks and approaches, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and the Delivering as One initiative, have contributed to improving coordination between the government and the United Nations at country level and to coordination among United Nations agencies. These findings are aligned with the 2024 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), which reported that in 2023, 84 per cent of programme country governments agreed that there was stronger coherence and less duplication in the United Nations development system at country level since the strengthening of the resident coordinator system.⁷

Some countries interviewed for the DCF survey study did, however, observe a tendency for agencies still to compete with one another and commented that United Nations agencies should improve collaboration among themselves. A lack of coordination among United Nations agencies can lead to agencies implementing similar projects without consulting one another, resulting in wasted resources and missed opportunities for more impactful interventions. Where agencies work in siloes, interconnected issues, for example in health, are not addressed through comprehensive, integrated strategies. Countries also

commented on agencies bypassing central coordinating ministries and viewed this as weakening coordinating ministries instead of strengthening national coordination capacities. In addition, they identified the different reporting systems and templates of United Nations agencies as inefficient and creating a heavy reporting burden on central coordinating ministries. The views of developing countries are consistent with the QCPR 2024 finding that despite progress made, United Nations Country Teams still experienced challenges in collaboration because of factors such as limited resources for resident coordinator functions, limited pooled funding and incentive structures that promote inter-agency competition rather than collaboration.

2.5 Principles for high-impact and high-quality international development cooperation

Developing countries see the general principles on effective development cooperation that underpin the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and aid effectiveness principles set out in the Global Partnership of Effective Development Cooperation as relevant but not enforced consistently.

Countries interviewed in the 2024 DCF Survey Study expressed concern that the principles were not being adhered to and that there was no accountability for non-compliance with these principles. These countries called for more effective execution of these principles and improved mutual accountability. Examples of non-adherence to effectiveness principles by development partners included (i) not fully respecting the principle of national ownership, and (ii) lack of transparency by development partners. Developing countries linked effectiveness of international development cooperation not only to quality but also to quantity of aid. They stressed that the continuous underfunding of development mandates ends up amplifying the negative impact of limited quality and effectiveness of international development cooperation.

There were countries that, though they agreed that the principles of effective development cooperation were relevant, they should be updated to address emerging global challenges, such as climate change and debt sustainability.

Upper middle-income country in the Latin America and Caribbean region: “Development partners are not always very transparent, it sometimes appears that there is so much that is not being shared...they make global agreements, distributing a lot of resources among different units, but do not necessarily report about it. So, as a country, there is no knowledge where this is being implemented.

2.6 Calls for updating the international development cooperation architecture

Developing countries saw the main purpose of international development cooperation as improving people’s lives in developing countries. This can be achieved through complementing and strengthening national resources and capacities by providing financial resources and technical expertise, fostering exchange of knowledge and technologies, and ensuring alignment between development cooperation and national development priorities. Respondent countries also observed the political dimension of development cooperation, recognizing that development cooperation is used as a means of influence at country, regional and global levels.

Developing countries identified key areas in the international development cooperation architecture that should be given attention, in particular at the forthcoming Fourth International Conference of Financing for Development.

Reforming the governance of global institutions to be more inclusive. There were calls from developing countries for reforms to the governance of global institutions. Within the context of international development cooperation, calls were made to make international financial institutions more inclusive of developing countries in decision-making so that policies and practices in international development cooperation set or shaped globally better reflect their needs, realities and priorities.

Measures to ensure accountability of developed countries to meet their commitments. Developing countries called for measures to hold developed countries accountable for meeting their commitments, particularly the 0.7 per cent GNI target, to reverse the trend in widening financing gaps in developing countries. They also call for development partners to

meet their commitments regarding the quality of international development cooperation, such as untying of aid, respect for national ownership, use of national systems, and transparency in how aid is allocated, how it is spent, and the outcome achieved.

Addressing concerns about debt and its link to lower quality and impact of international development cooperation. Developing countries expressed concern about what they perceived to be a growth in the volume of loans and a concomitant reduction in grants, exacerbating financial vulnerabilities of developing countries. They made strong calls for greater access to grants and better terms for concessional loans to reduce the high levels of debt.

Role of the United Nations system. Developing countries have high expectations of the United Nations system as a key institution in the international development cooperation architecture. At the country level, developing countries see the United Nations system playing a key role in reducing fragmentation of international development cooperation by using its convening powers to bring together government actors, development partners and other stakeholders to discuss priorities and address challenges collaboratively. United Nations support for strengthening country-level institutional capacities to coordinate development cooperation is another expectation that developing countries have of the United Nations system. There were also calls for the United Nations system to improve its internal coordination and internal coherence of interventions of various United Nations agencies. This requires effective use of the UNSDCF as a coordinating framework and for United Nations agencies to develop joint programmes and pool resources for greater impact.

At the global level, developing countries look to the United Nations to reduce the negative effects of fragmentation in international development cooperation by providing platforms for strengthening dialogue and coherence among the multiplicity of actors and stakeholders in international development cooperation, including beneficiaries. There were also expectations that the United Nations system would, in keeping with its normative mandate, reduce fragmentation by continuing to advocate for adherence to universal commitments and principles of global agendas, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai

Framework, Paris Agreement and South-South cooperation principles.

Strengthened national development cooperation architecture. Developing countries identified the need for the development cooperation architecture at the country level to be strengthened to enable developing countries to reinforce and employ country ownership and mobilize and manage development cooperation more effectively. They also called for strengthening

country-level capacities to enable them to navigate the complexities of international development cooperation policies and practices. Developing countries also acknowledged the need to strengthen institutional capacities for mobilizing and managing international development cooperation at sub-national levels for the effectiveness and sustainability of development initiatives.



3.0 How enablers support effectiveness of international development cooperation

3.1 Trends in key enablers

The key enablers, as currently conceptualized, have been used in the DCF survey studies since 2016. The extent to which the four key enablers were in place varied across the five DCF surveys (Figure 4) conducted since then. In 2024, a lower percentage of countries (68 per cent) reported having national development cooperation policies (NDCPs) in place compared to 2022 (82 per cent), although that number is consistent with the figures for 2016, 2018 and 2020. Across the five surveys, most countries had development cooperation information systems (DCIS) in place (ranging from 90 per cent to 78 per cent). The presence of national development cooperation forums (NDCFfs) has declined from 90 per cent of countries

in 2016 to 63 per cent in 2024. Country results frameworks (CRFs) are consistently the least prevalent enabler since 2016; in 2024, fewer than half of the respondent countries (47 per cent) reported that they had CRFs in place.

While there has been a steady core of regularly participating countries, the variations across the biennial surveys can be partially attributed to changes in which countries participate in the exercise. Ensuring sections of the survey study report also explore the effect of changes within the countries, in particular, changes in government which may result in a delay in approving policies, shifting government priorities and / or insufficient technical and financial capacity to put these enablers in place and operationalize them.

Key messages



Key enablers remain crucial, with NDCPs and DCIS being the most widely used



LDCs are strong adopters of enablers of international development cooperation



Capacity constraints limit effective design and implementation of key enablers



Technical cooperation, grants and concessional loans remain the three most used modalities of international development cooperation

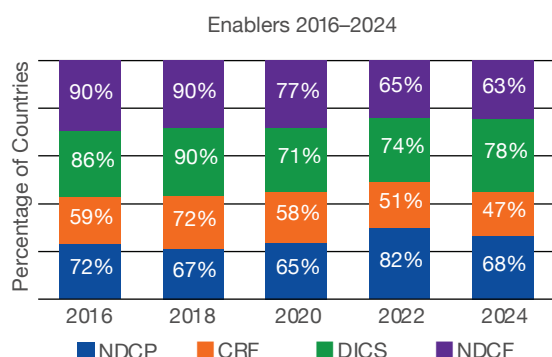


Blended finance was the least used modality of development cooperation



Capacity support is needed to strengthen key enablers and country-level institutions

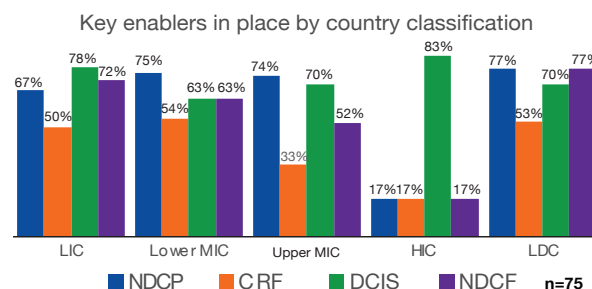
Figure 4: Key enablers of effective development cooperation 2016-2024



3.2 Key enablers 2024/2025

The key enablers of effective development cooperation remain relevant tools for developing countries across all regions in mobilizing and managing development cooperation. In 2024, all regions had key enablers in place to manage development cooperation (Figure 5). National development cooperation policies (NDCPs) were in place in 77 per cent of respondent countries from the Africa region and in 71 per cent of respondent countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Where respondent countries did not have NDCPs in place, the main reasons mentioned were lack of technical capacity and financial resources rather than lack of demand for these enablers. Development cooperation information systems (DCIS) featured prominently in all regions, particularly in the Latin America and Caribbean

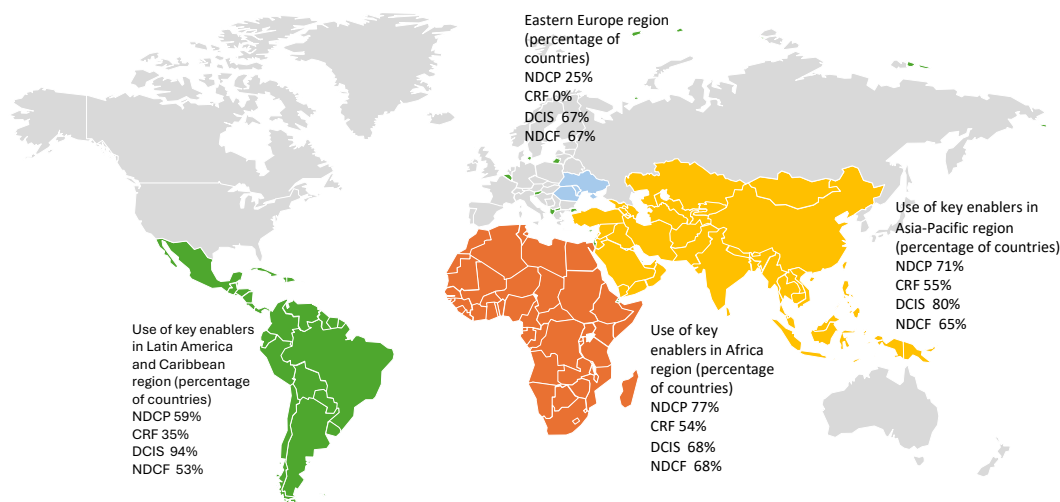
Figure 6: Key enablers by country classification: 2024/2025



region (94 per cent) and in the Asia Pacific region (80 per cent). These two regions have a relatively high presence of high-income and upper middle-income countries and countries with capacity for information systems. National development cooperation forums (NDCFs) were in place in respondent countries in all regions but slightly less prevalent in LAC than in other regions. Country results frameworks (CRFs) featured less prominently than the other three key enablers and were also less utilized in LAC than in other regions.

Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are among the strongest adopters of the key enablers for effective development cooperation. As many as 77 per cent of respondent LDCs had NDCPs in place, and a similar percentage had NDCFs in place. More than half of respondent LDCs (53 per cent) had CRFs in place and 70 per cent had DCIS in place (Figure 6). Effective development cooperation is essential for LDCs and in their transition to sustainable graduation from their LDC status. Interviewed countries recently graduated

Figure 5: Distribution of key enablers across regions: 2024/2025



and those preparing to graduate in the next two years emphasised the importance of more effective development cooperation for their sustainable graduation out of the LDC status..

3.3 National development cooperation policies

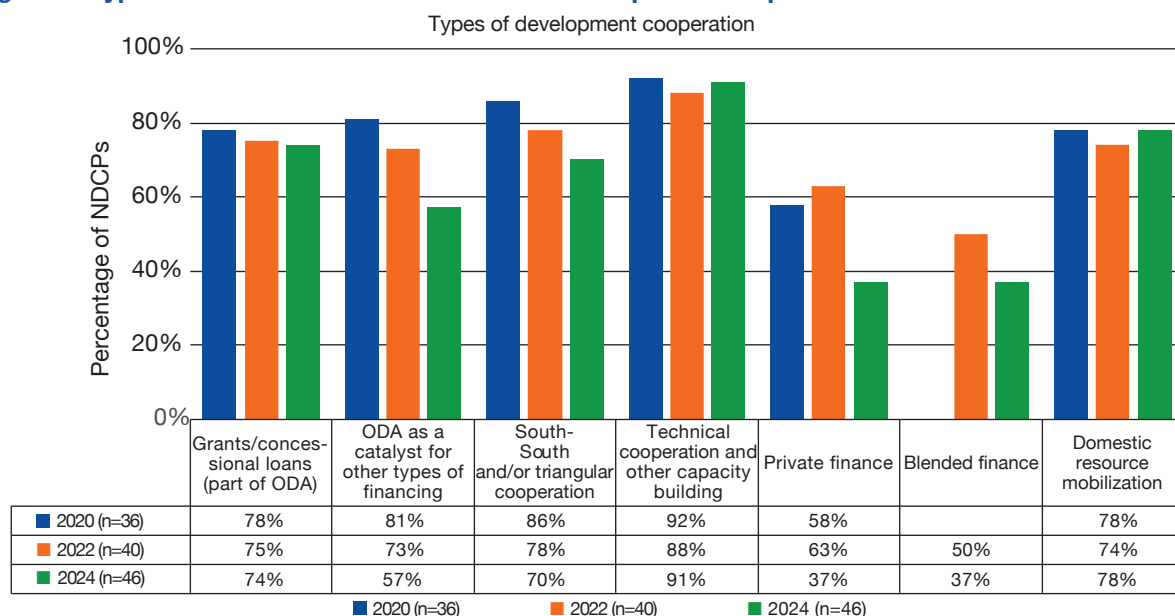
The formulation and implementation of national development cooperation policies is one of the notable advancements by developing countries in the pursuit of effective development cooperation. The 2009 DCF survey highlighted the lack of aid policies (or partnership frameworks) in developing countries, with the situation improving somewhat by 2014. The DCF surveys have over the years emphasized the centrality of development cooperation policies to effective development cooperation and since 2016, 65 per cent or more of developing countries that participated in the DCF survey had NDCPs in place. The DCF surveys also encouraged developing countries to adopt comprehensive development cooperation policies that went beyond ODA and were aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global frameworks. The Addis Ababa Agenda for Action and the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development served as inflection points for developing countries to review their aid policies and adopt more comprehensive national development cooperation policies (NDCPs).

NDCPs continue to reflect a broad range of modalities of international development cooperation, with technical cooperation, ODA and South-South cooperation among the most commonly referenced.

In the 2024/2025 DCF survey, technical cooperation (91 per cent), grants/concessional loans part of ODA (74 per cent), South-south and/or triangular cooperation (70 per cent) were identified in NDCPs of most respondent countries. The NDCPs of most respondent countries (78 per cent) also included domestic resource mobilization (DRM), an indication that respondent countries recognize the primacy of DRM in financing their development as envisaged in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (Figure 7).

Technical cooperation, grants and concessional loans remain the three most used modalities of international development cooperation. While NDCPs from 2016 onwards increasingly reflect the diversity of development finance and other means of implementation required by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ODA (grants/concessional loans), technical cooperation, capacity building remain the predominant forms of development cooperation. Specifically, developing countries identified bilateral grants, technical cooperation, and multilateral concessional loans as the three most used forms of development cooperation (Figure 8). There were differences across the regions, with the Africa region reporting a higher percentage of countries using bilateral loans and multilateral concessional loans than the Latin America and Caribbean region and the Asia-Pacific region.

Figure 7: Types of financial and non-financial development cooperation in NDCPs: 2020-2024



Countries across income groupings expressed strong concern about the decline in the use of grants and the increased use of loans, including concessional loans, to finance their development. They were also concerned about debt sustainability and concessional loans, which often came with conditions that may not favour long-term sustainable development.

Blended finance was the least used type of development cooperation and was identified as an area for capacity support. In the 2024 survey, only 37 per cent of countries' NDCPs referred to blended finance and private finance. The interviews revealed that 11 countries (6 upper middle-income countries and 5 lower middle-income countries) had leveraged blended finance for infrastructure development, renewable energy and climate action, typically combining concessional loans with private investment. These countries perceived blended finance as a means of increasing the volume of development finance when grants were declining, and as a means of reducing reliance on grants. There was however a reluctance among some countries to use blended finance due to the cost of private finance and concerns about the sustainability of debt. Another constraint to the use of blended finance was the perceived reluctance of the private sector to invest in countries where governance structures were seen to be weak or under-developed. Insufficient capacity to design and manage blended finance mechanisms was

seen as a constraint to using blended finance. Even those countries that used blended finance acknowledged the need for more capacity support in designing and managing blended finance mechanisms.

Though positive about the benefits of SSCT and the expressed desire to expand SSCT, interviews also identified several challenges to implementing SSCT.

South-South and triangular cooperation offers developing countries opportunities to share knowledge, resources and experiences for the mutual benefit of the countries partnering in the cooperation. South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSCT) was covered in 70 per cent of NDCPs of respondent countries in 2024. **The percentage of NDCPs covering SSCT in 2024 is lower than in the previous two DCF surveys.** Slightly more than half (58 per cent) of NDCPs of upper middle-income countries covered SSCT. The situation is slightly different with lower middle-income countries, 10 out of 16 NDCPs (68 per cent) covered SSCT. All NDCPs from low-income countries covered SSCT, suggesting the importance low-income countries attach to SSCT (Figure 9).

Interviews of respondent countries revealed a diversity of priorities or areas of SSCT, including health, education, agriculture, food security, and to a lesser extent, trade and industry. SSCT on climate action, disaster risk reduction, transition to renewable energy and innovative financing were mentioned by several

Figure 8: Three most used types of development cooperation by region: 2024/2025

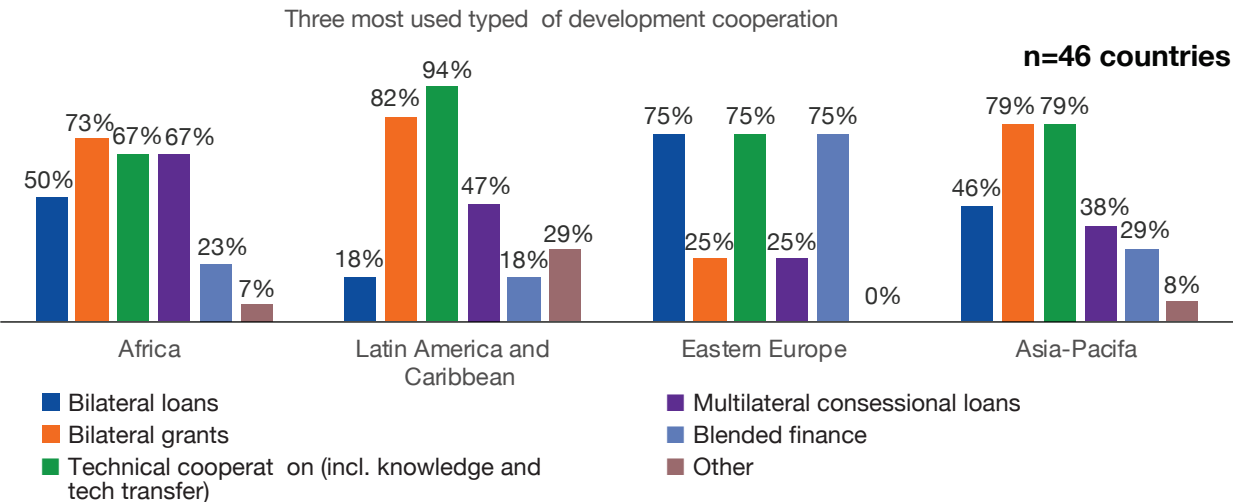
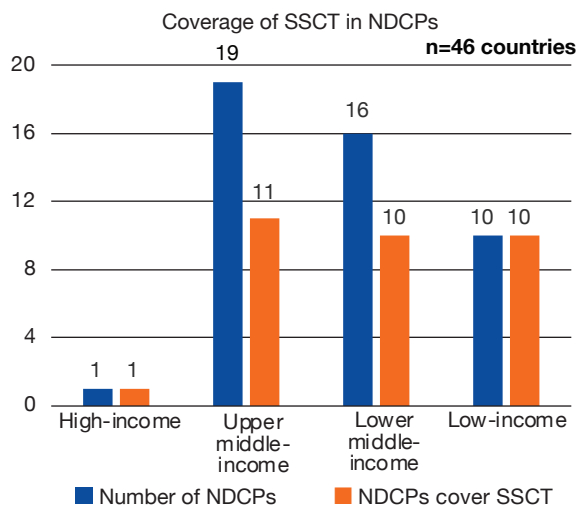


Figure 9: Coverage of South-South and Triangular Cooperation in NDCPs by country income group: 2024/2025



interviewed countries, reflecting the increasing importance of these areas for developing countries. Box 3 provides examples of how interviewed countries are using SSCT to advance national sustainable development goals.

Countries identified several benefits they derived from SSCT. The benefits included access to alternative funding sources and technical expertise from other developing countries with similar socio-economic contexts, platforms for knowledge exchange and policy dialogue on issues of mutual interest, innovation and technology transfer. Interviewed countries also identified political benefits of SSCT, including strengthening diplomatic relations and regional integration among developing countries.

Box 3: How countries are using South-South and Technical cooperation to advance national sustainable development goals

High-income SIDS in the Asia-Pacific region: The country received accreditation for direct access to the Green Climate Fund to implement and manage funded projects locally. The country is now supporting neighbouring SIDS to obtain accreditation from the Green Climate Fund.

High-income SIDS in the Africa region: The country's SSCT entailed knowledge exchanges with other SIDS, but it has decided to expand its SSCT to other African states on the mainland. There have been knowledge and technical exchanges with the support of the United Nations. Currently the country is discussing data issues with other countries and learning how data collection and tracking can be improved.

Upper middle-income country in the Latin America and Caribbean region: The country has been engaged in SSCT for over 15 years and has regulations in place governing the application of SSCT. The country has a catalogue of technical cooperation projects that other countries are invited to replicate. The catalogues outline the strengths and methodologies used and the prerequisites for replicating or adapting the methodologies to country needs. The catalogue is reviewed regularly with the institutions offering the methodologies and updated against predefined criteria. If a best practice is not readily adaptable to other country contexts, it is removed from the catalogue.

Lower middle-income country from the Africa region: The country launched its South-South and Triangular Cooperation Strategy in 2023 and has begun to operationalise the strategy through different activities, including knowledge sharing on Just Financing. The country also has triangular cooperation projects in the pipeline. Publications on successful practices form part of the SSCT activities and include topics such as the Just Energy Transition, sustainable and innovative agricultural practices and innovative financing solutions. The country plans to enhance tracking mechanisms for SSCT.

Low-income country in the Africa region: The country integrates or mainstreams SSCT in development cooperation activities, so there is no single unit of department responsible for SSCT. Cooperation with other African countries and major developing countries outside of Africa has been increasing in recent years. SSCT focuses on capacity building and sharing experiences with other countries.

The challenges identified by respondent countries include:

1. Institutional frameworks for SSCT not in place: Even though NDCPs include coverage of SSCT, NDCPs may not provide details on how SSCT will be implemented and monitored. Some countries have developed institutional frameworks or strategies on SSCT to address this gap. In the absence of these institutional frameworks, developing countries do not have clearly articulated goals and results expected from SSCT, and run the risk of engaging in SSCT activities that will add limited value to the country's development priorities or entering SSCT on less favourable terms. Interviewed countries also mentioned the challenge of measuring the impact of SSCT.
2. Securing favourable terms: Low-income and lower middle-income countries had trouble in securing favourable terms in SSCT agreements when the other country was more powerful, economically or politically. They felt that they had limited negotiating power. One country observed a growing concern over adherence to the principles of non-interference and non-conditionality, particularly among developing countries with broader geopolitical aspirations and called for more emphatic communi-

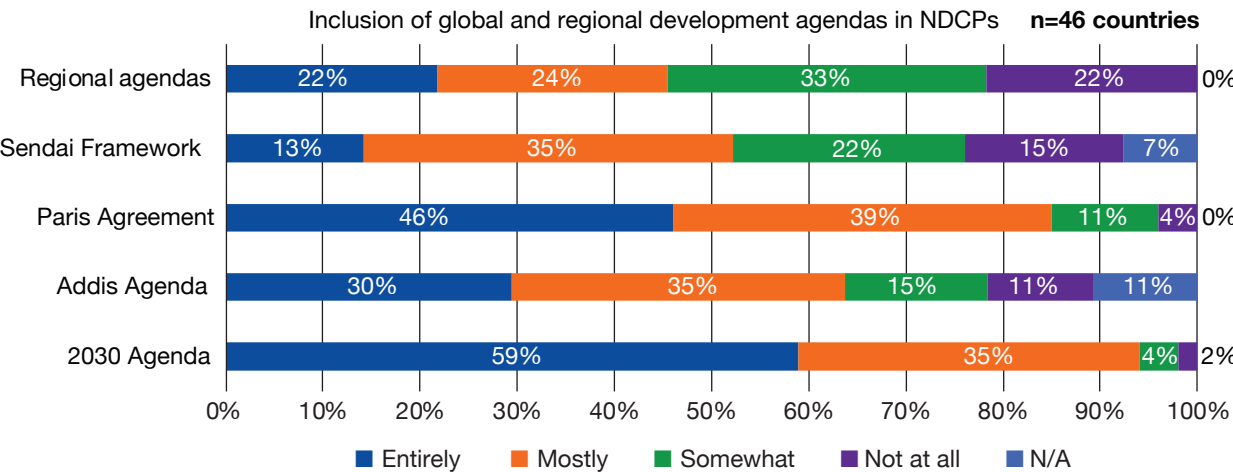
cation to SSCT participants about strict compliance with these principles. A related challenges was the differing priorities between the countries involved in SSCT, making the establishment of common goals complicated.

3. Limited financial resources and shortage of skilled personnel: Countries interviewed commented that they did not always have the minimum staff capacity to implement or manage SSCT activities. This limited the potential benefit that these countries derive from SSCT. Although positive about the knowledge and good practices gained from exchanges with other developing countries, the ability to apply these into their institutions is hampered by lack of financial resources.

The 2030 Agenda and Paris Agenda are reflected in most NDCPs, but the Addis Agenda and Sendai Framework are contained in fewer NDCPs.

If development cooperation is expected to support the efforts of developing countries in implementing global agendas, then ideally this should be reflected in NDCPs. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is well reflected in NDCPs (94 per cent entirely/mostly), as is the Paris Agreement (85 per cent entirely/mostly). **In the case of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, 65 per cent of countries with NDCPs rated the inclusion of this agenda as entirely/mostly.**

Figure 10: Global and regional development agendas in NDCPs: 2024/2025



This is lower than the rating of 75 per cent in 2022. Eleven per cent of respondent countries indicated that their NDCPs did not include the Addis Agenda at all. The 2022 DCF survey noted that the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction was an area that needed improvement in view of the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2024 DCF survey shows little improvement in this area, with less than half of NDCPs (48 per cent entirely/mostly) including the Sendai Framework. Given the growing climate crisis and the heightened vulnerability of less developed countries and SIDS to environmental crises and disasters, it is imperative that NDCPs better spell out the role of development cooperation in reaching the 7 global targets of the Sendai Framework

Only 46 per cent of country respondents indicated that efforts to implement regional development agendas were contained in NDCPs. When disaggregated by region, 77 per cent of respondent countries from the Africa region indicated that the regional development agenda (Africa Agenda 2063) was reflected entirely/mostly in NDCPs. This is in stark contrast to other regions: in the Asia-Pacific region only 27 per cent of respondent countries stated that their NDCPs entirely/mostly reflected the regional development agenda and in the Latin America and Caribbean region only 10 per cent.

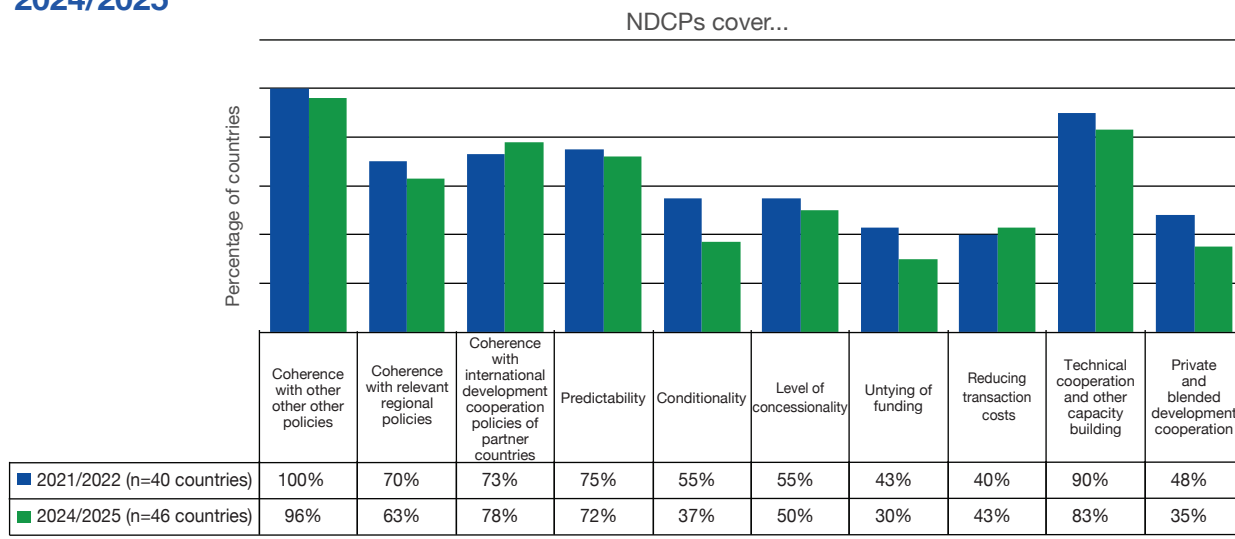
While NDCPs cover several dimensions of the quality of development cooperation, few cover the dimensions of conditionality, untying of funding, reducing transaction costs, and the quality of private and blended development cooperation.

How development cooperation is delivered can have a positive or detrimental impact on the quality, effectiveness and impact of development cooperation. Ideally, indicators should be attached to these factors for monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness and impact.

“When developing a policy or strategy document, in the beginning you tend to set too many targets, but you are not able to pay attention to all of them. If you narrow them down and then work at it bit by bit, then you can focus and achieve these targets and indicators.” – Lower middle-income country in the Africa region

In the 2024/2025 DCF survey, most countries’ NDCPs elaborated on the quality of technical cooperation and capacity building (83 per cent), coherence with relevant national policies (96 per cent), and coherence with international development cooperation policies of partner countries (78 per cent), as well as predictability of development cooperation (72 per cent). However, many NDCPs still do not include other critical quality dimensions of development cooperation. Untying of funds is important as it refers to the practice of allowing developing countries to use development finance to purchase goods and services in virtually all countries, as opposed to tying funds to vendors in donor or limited groups of countries. However, the untying of funds was covered in only 30 per cent of NDCPs in 2024, declining from an already low 43 per cent of 2022. Only 35 per cent of NDCPs covered

Figure 11: NDCP coverage of quality of development cooperation: 2021/2022 and 2024/2025



measures to strengthen the quality of private and blended development cooperation, declining from 48 per cent in 2022. Similarly, only 37 per cent of NDCPs covered conditionality of development cooperation in 2024. Less than half of NDCPs (47 per cent) covered reducing transaction costs (Figure 11). These trends are inconsistent with findings of the survey and other recent studies that all these areas remain areas of grave importance for developing countries. The findings may also point to a lack of technical capacity in countries to assess in detail the country-specific policy implications of an increasingly complex and fragmented landscape of international development cooperation and translate those into meaningful NDCPs.

NDCPs cover the roles of a wide range of development actors and stakeholders.

Articulating the roles of development actors and stakeholders in NDCPs is necessary for effective mobilization, coordination and management of development cooperation and for holding development actors and stakeholders accountable. In 2024, most NDCPs covered the role of national government actors (100 per cent) and international development cooperation partners in general (85 per cent). Few NDCPs cover OECD DAC partners and non-OECD DAC partners as distinct actors, preferring to cover development cooperation partners collectively.

NDCPs are increasingly including the role of national non-governmental organizations and civil society, recognizing the importance of partnerships with this category of stakeholders in achieving progress on the SDGs. In 2024, 74 per cent of NDCPs covered the role of NGOs/CSOs, compared to 54 per cent of NDCPs in 2020. The role of the private sector was covered in 70 per cent of NDCPs in 2024 compared to 67 per cent in 2020.

The extent to which NDCPs covered development actors and stakeholders varied across the different income categories. NDCPs of low-income countries were more likely to cover the roles of intergovernmental organizations, multilateral development banks, OECD-DAC partners, non-OECD-DAC partners, and national NGOs than other countries (Figure 12). This reflects the central roles these development actors play in these low-income countries. It also highlights the potential challenges that low-income countries face in coordinating a large number of diverse development actors, exacerbated by their relatively limited institutional capacities for such coordination.

Targets covered in NDCPs are predominantly for national governments and less so for individual development cooperation partners.

The setting of clear, measurable targets in NDCPs is necessary for monitoring progress with the implementation of the policy and evaluating its effectiveness periodically. Targets also communicate to development actors and stakeholders the results that the development cooperation is expected to achieve. In 2024/2025, NDCPs contained targets mainly for national-level government actors (i.e. within the developing country government) (89 per cent), sectoral-level government actors (80 per cent) (Figure 13). As with previous DCF surveys, few NDCPs contained targets for individual external development partners and for non-OECD DAC partners. Respondent countries in the past indicated that targets for individual development partners were negotiated bilaterally with them and were reflected more appropriately in partnership agreements.

Respondent countries were positive about the relevance of the targets in their NDCPs (89 per cent entirely/mostly) and about the completeness of coverage of all relevant sectors (73 per cent entirely/mostly). They considered the number of indicators in their NDCPs to be an appropriate number. Respondent countries also expressed positive views on the extent to which the targets in their NDCPs were quantified and measurable. Having quantified and measurable indicators facilitates monitoring policy implementation and results, and potentially contributes to transparency and mutual accountability.

Figure 12: Stakeholders covered in NDCPs by country income classification: 2024/2025

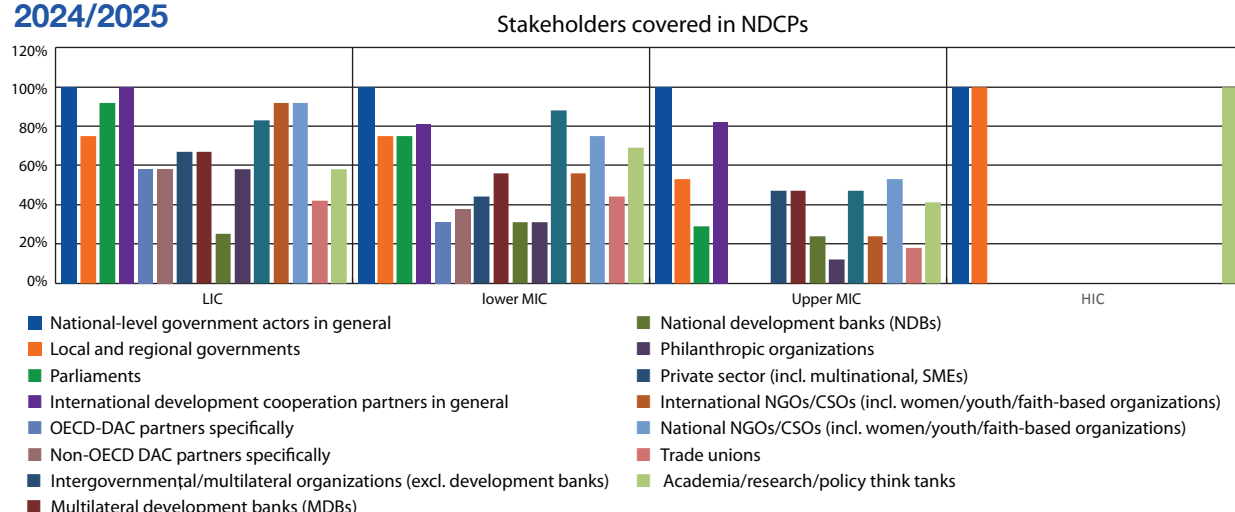


Figure 13: Targets for development actors and stakeholders: 2024/2025

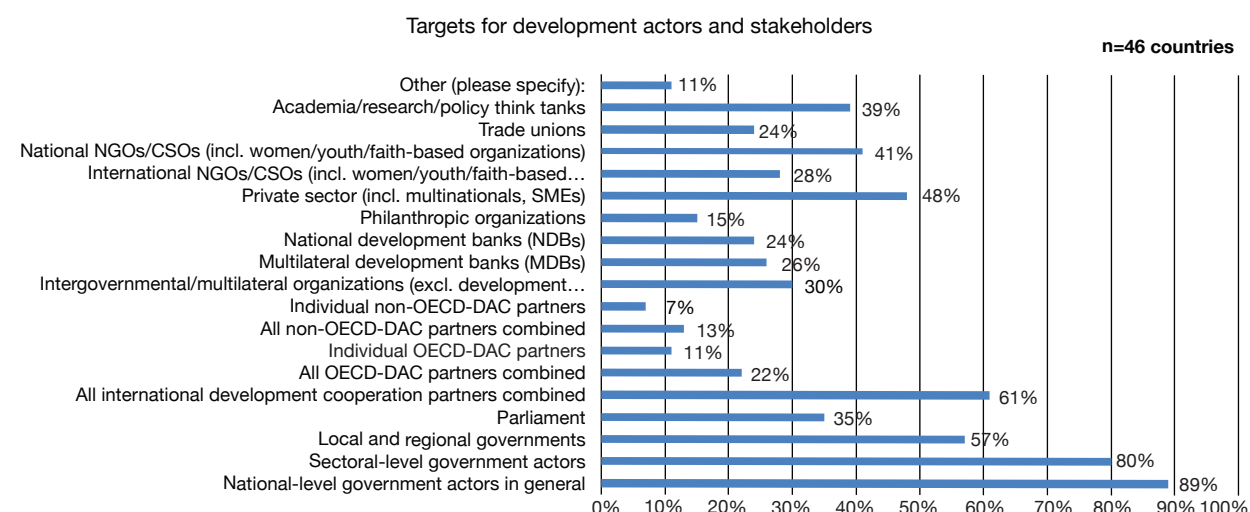
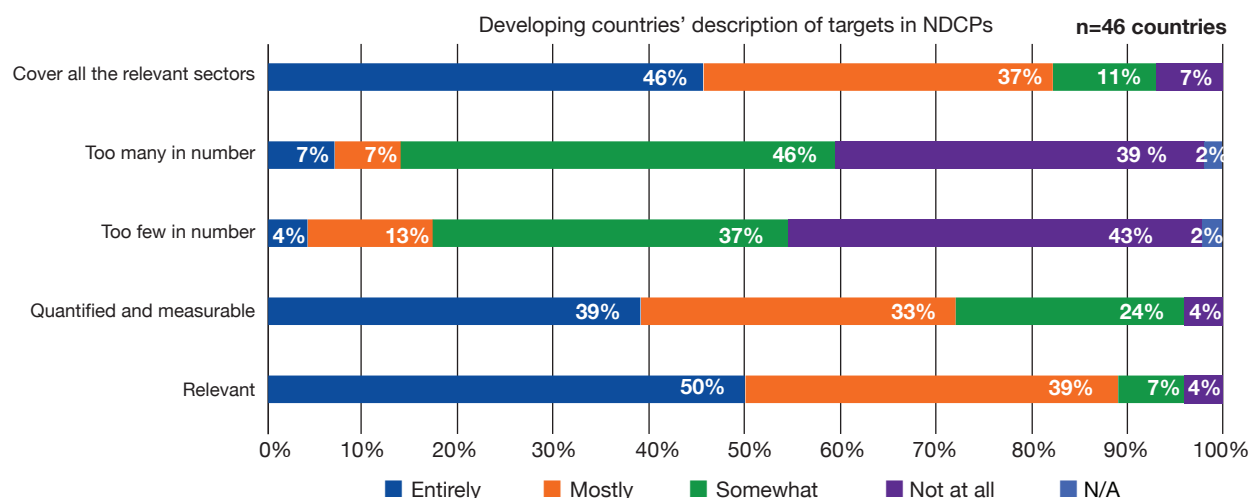


Figure 14: Developing countries' description of targets in NDCPs: 2024/2025



3.4 Country results frameworks

Country results frameworks (CRFs) play a critical role in the effectiveness of international development cooperation, as they offer a structured approach to measuring progress, aligning strategies with objectives and enhancing accountability. CRFs often integrate national development priorities with the Sustainable Development Goals and enable countries to track progress against SDG targets, as well as development cooperation performance targets. Performance targets may cover dimensions of quantity and quality of development cooperation, as well targets for government actors, development partners and other stakeholders. The use of CRFs can foster mutual accountability between governments and development partners by clarifying roles, expectations and measurable results. Effective CRFs can also serve as an incentive for development partners to reduce or eliminate parallel results frameworks, thereby reducing the reporting burden for developing countries.

In the 2024 DCF survey, 32 countries (47 per cent of respondent countries) had CRFs in place – the lowest percentage since 2016. Of the countries that had CRFs, 25 countries incorporated CRFs in their NDCPs.

The contents of 24 NDCPs and CRFs shared by respondent countries were reviewed to ascertain how these countries crafted their CRFs. There was a high

The results framework with detailed targets and indicators provides a framework for the country's development cooperation. Any development partner is supposed to align the intervention with the development plan. It provides the groundwork, the area of cooperation, whether it is funded by development partner, external resource or domestic resource, the area of cooperation and the priority already set in the development plan. — Lower-income country in Africa region.

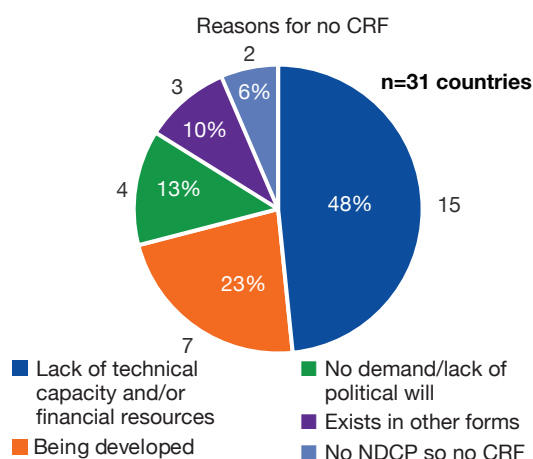
Box 4: Actions developing countries are taking to strengthen country results frameworks: 2024/2025

SIDS in the Asia-Pacific region: In revising the indicators for the upcoming National Development Cooperation Policy (NDCP), we streamlined them to be more target-oriented and better aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators, while adjusting SDG language to better fit national needs. The decision to revise indicators stemmed from challenges encountered in the last development plan, where indicator wording created reporting difficulties for line ministries. The revision process involved collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the Sustainable Pacific Community (SPC), senior technical staff, and deputy secretaries. Several meetings and workshops were held earlier in the year, where consensus was reached on refining the indicators. These revisions are believed to have resulted in a clearer, more accessible set of indicators, outlined in the policy framework with specific targets.

A lower middle-income country in the Africa region: Setting achievable targets or key performance indicators has not been an issue. They claim that they had their objectives closely aligned with the SDG indicator framework, as sustainable development is at the heart of what they are doing. We are waiting for the new government's objectives to be set out over the next five years to ensure that these programmes are aligned with the benchmarks and frameworks. There are some impact measurement practices in place. Different programmes and modules of development cooperation policy are monitored in regular intervals and results published. These further inform performance indicators.

SIDS in the Asia-Pacific region: The country is in the process of further developing and improving the monitoring and evaluation framework. Most of the indicators in the framework are from the previous strategic plan and not measurable at all. There was no data in place to measure against the targets. A technical assistant from UNESCAP was working with the government to formulate the new framework and consulted directly with the line ministries, which led to discovery of the problem. UNESCAP is supporting with mapping the strategic plan, linking it to the SDGs and the targets.

Figure 15: Reasons for no country results framework in place: 2024/2025



degree of variation in the format and content of CRFs. Eight of the CRFs reviewed were comprehensive and contained results matrices that set out development cooperation goals or objectives, results, indicators, baselines and targets, data sources or means of verification, and responsible actors. Two went further to include risks and assumptions. The remaining CRFs, which formed part of the NDCPs, or National Development Plans or strategies, had results frameworks. However, these remaining CRFs did not include results for development cooperation. There were NDCPs which stated that the implementation of the policy

would be monitored, albeit with no results framework proposed.

Past DCF surveys have established that developing CRFs remains a persistent challenge for many developing countries. The lack of technical capacity in developing countries, difficulty in setting targets for increasingly diverse development partners and the existence of parallel development partner frameworks were among the constraints to robust CRFs identified in previous surveys. In the 2024 DCF survey the lack of technical capacity and financial resources was the main reason countries offered for not having CRFs in place (Figure 15). It is worth noting that 25 respondent countries had received capacity support for developing or upgrading their CRFs.

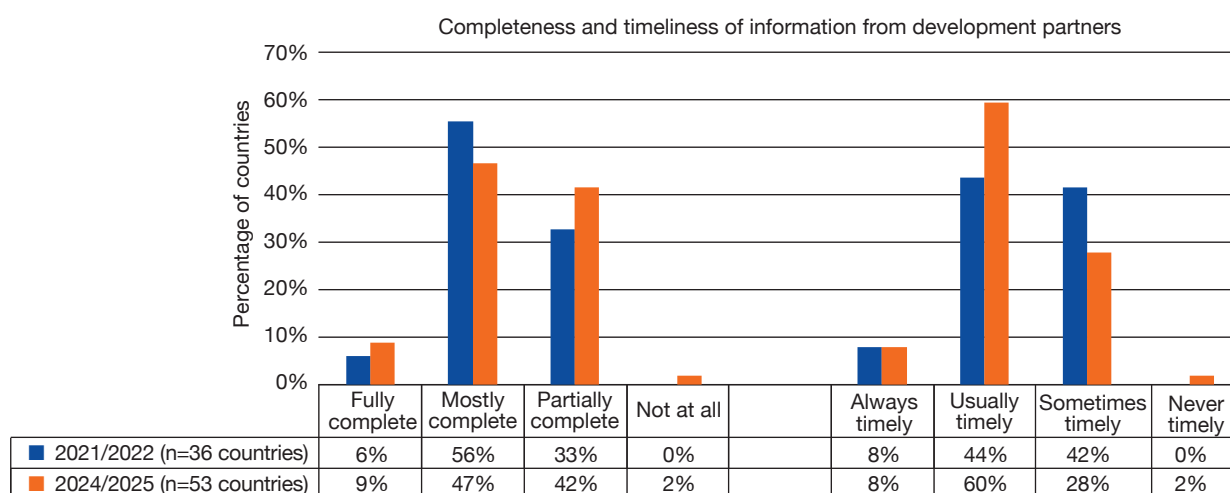
Countries interviewed for the 2024 DCF survey study echoed similar challenges to those raised in past DCF survey studies but were also able to point to positive actions taken to strengthen CRFs.

3.5 Development cooperation information systems

Developing countries continue to strengthen their DCIS, but some challenges remain, including incomplete data from development partners.

Most developing countries that participated in past DCF surveys have a system in place to track development cooperation and report progress, and this was the case again in the 2024/2025 DCF survey, where 58

Figure 16: Completeness and timeliness of information from development partners: 2021/2022 and 2024/2025



countries (78 per cent) indicated that they had such a system in place. These development cooperation information systems (DCIS) range from simple Excel spreadsheets to web-based platforms that centralize information on development cooperation flows, project implementation and results.

If populated with timely, reliable data, these systems have the potential to greatly enhance transparency, reduce duplication of efforts, and enable better coordination among development partners. However, developing countries in past surveys indicated that DCIS effectiveness was impeded by lack of timely data, lack of capacity for data analysis and lack of capacity to maintain systems developed externally and not integrated with other government information systems. The 2022 DCF noted that timeliness and completeness of information could be improved.

There has been an improvement in the timeliness of information from development partners (68 per cent always/usually timely in 2024 compared to 52 per cent in 2022) (Figure 16). However, there has been no improvement in the completeness of information from development partners.

The DCIS of respondent countries mainly track current disbursements (75 per cent of DCIS), progress on implementation of projects and progress (70 per cent of DCIS), technical cooperation and capacity building (68 per cent), government progress against development cooperation targets (62 per cent) and progress by international development cooperation partners against targets (60 per cent).

The DCIS of several countries still do not track development cooperation comprehensively. Notable gaps in the DCIS are the tracking of progress on untied aid (only 13 per cent of DCIS track this), project and/programme conditionalities (25 per cent of DCIS), and use of international development cooperation to combat inequalities (21 per cent of DCIS).

The DCIS is accessible to government, development partners and, to a lesser extent, to non-state actors. Despite accessibility, the regular use of the DCIS is low among development partners and non-state actors.

If the DCIS is to serve as an enabler of transparency and accountability in development cooperation,

Box 5: Actions countries are taking to improve their DCIS

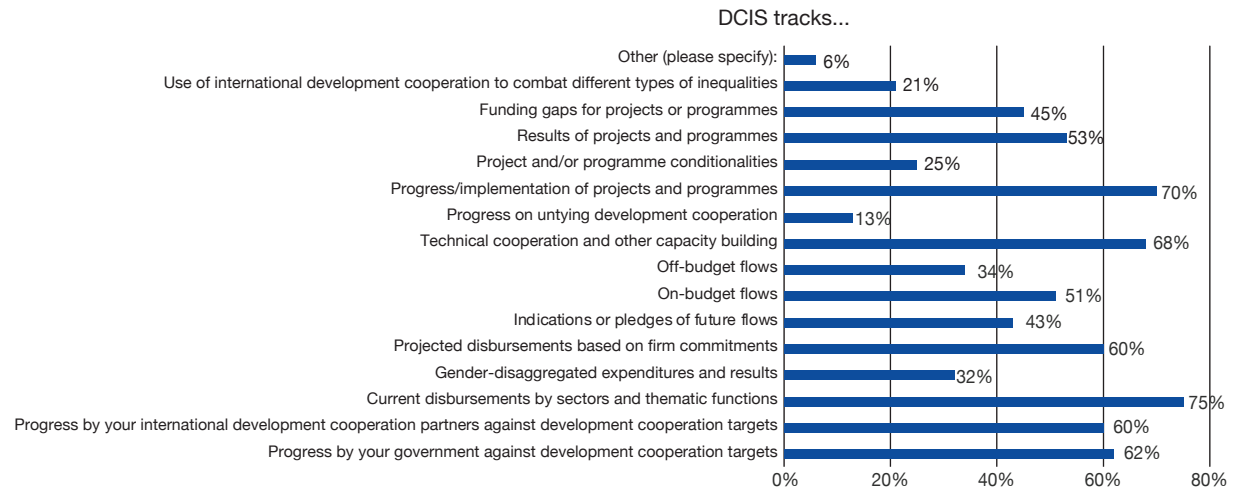
Lower middle-income country in the Africa region: The country has recently reviewed and revised its DCIS to address the shortcomings identified by the review. Development partners are now able to populate the system with themselves, and this is expected to reduce the delays in receiving data from development partners. The revised DCIS is also linked to the International Data Transparency Initiative (IATI) platform, enabling data entry and data extraction from IATI.

Low-income country in the Africa region: The exchange of data between the government and development partners was not optimal. There were delays in receiving data from development partners, and the latter in turn experienced delays in receiving data from government partners. Development partners complained that the system was too complex and not user-friendly. An independent assessment commissioned by the government confirmed the limitations of the DCIS. The government has committed to develop a new “more user-friendly” DCIS and are trying to mobilize resources for the new system.

SIDS in the Asia-Pacific region: This country has a rudimentary DCIS, namely, an Excel spreadsheet that is accessible only to the government. Civil society and development partners are required to make a formal request for information from the DCIS. Plans are underway to develop a system that will track all development cooperation information in greater detail and will be made accessible to the public.

SIDS in the Asia-Pacific region: This country implemented a new DCIS in 2023 to improve financial reporting on recurrent budgets and development budgets. The new system is operational and experiencing challenges such as errors in data coding and data entry and some system limitations. The government hopes to update the system to address the gaps and train staff on the new requirements.

Figure 17: Information tracked by DCIS: 2024/2025



the DCIS should be accessible to the range of development actors, including international development partners, non-state actors and the public. The DCIS is accessible (fully/moderately) to national governments (85 per cent), sub-national governments (60 per cent) and parliaments (57 per cent). In the case of development partners, multilateral banks (58 per cent), intergovernmental organizations partners (55 per cent), OECD-DAC partners (53 per cent) and national development banks (53 per cent), the DCIS is fully/moderately accessible. The DCIS is slightly less accessible to non-state actors: private sector and philanthropic organizations (47 per cent) and independent monitoring groups (33 per cent).

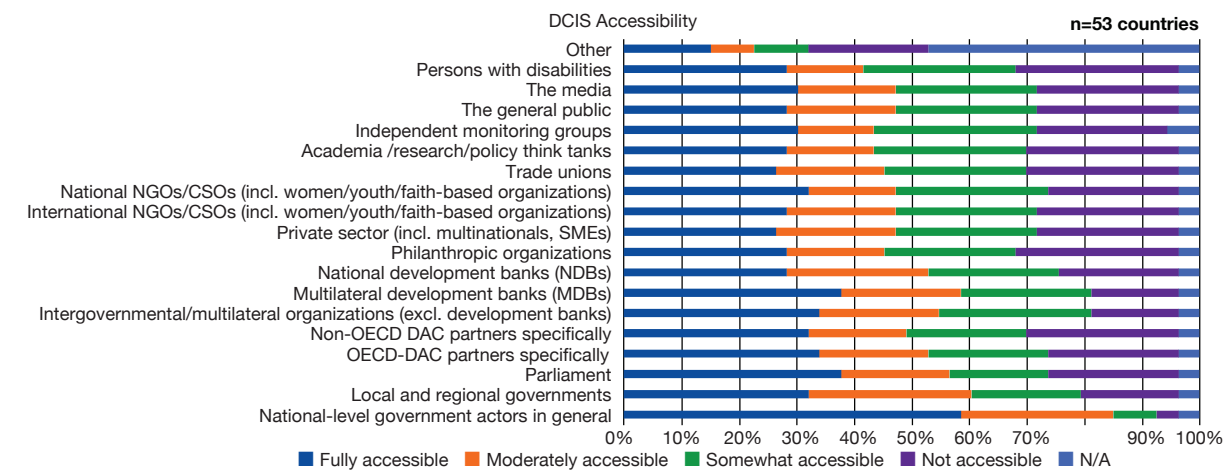
National government actors were more likely to be regular users of the DCIS (92 per cent of respondent countries) compared to any other category of stakeholders (Figure 19). There may be several reasons for the relatively low percentage of regular users outside of national government actors. For example, it may be that there is no demand for the information contained in the DCIS, lack of awareness of the existence of the DCIS, lack of access to the DCIS, or stakeholder lack of confidence in the quality and integrity of the DCIS data. Developing countries are taking steps to improve their DCIS.

Box 6: Concrete benefits of NDCF for quality, effectiveness and impact of development cooperation: 2024/2025

Low-income country in the Africa region: The use of the National Development Cooperation Forum (NDCF) has significantly influenced stakeholder behaviours, leading to improvements in the quality, quantity, and impact of development cooperation through the following:

- **Strategic Guidance:** The forum has become a critical venue for aligning development activities with national priorities and strategic objectives. Through regular dialogue, stakeholders are better informed about government policies and frameworks, ensuring their projects contribute effectively to the country's development agenda.
- **Policy Coherence:** The NDCF fosters a coherent policy environment where development actions are harmonized with national strategies, leading to more targeted and impactful interventions.
- **Open Dialogue:** The NDCF promotes transparency through open and regular exchanges of information among stakeholders. This openness helps in building trust and accountability, as partners are held accountable for their commitments and actions.
- **Monitoring and Reporting:** By establishing clear mechanisms for monitoring and reporting, the forum ensures that stakeholders provide timely updates on their activities, enhancing oversight and accountability.

Figure 18: Accessibility of DCIS to stakeholders: 2024/2025



3.6 National development cooperation forums

Developing country governments require mechanisms or platforms for discussing development cooperation priorities, progress and challenges among national and international development cooperation partners, as well as other stakeholders. The term “National Development Cooperation Forums” (NDCFs) is used in the survey as an umbrella term for a central country-led platform for strengthening mutual accountability, knowledge shar-

ing and learning among international development cooperation actors and domestic actors and stakeholders. Governments determine the membership of NDCFs and their operations according to their preferences and the country context. NDCFs have been in place in most countries surveyed since 2016 and proved to be critical during periods of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic and for discussions on domesticating important global commitments, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework.

Figure 19: Regular users of development cooperation information systems: 2024/2025

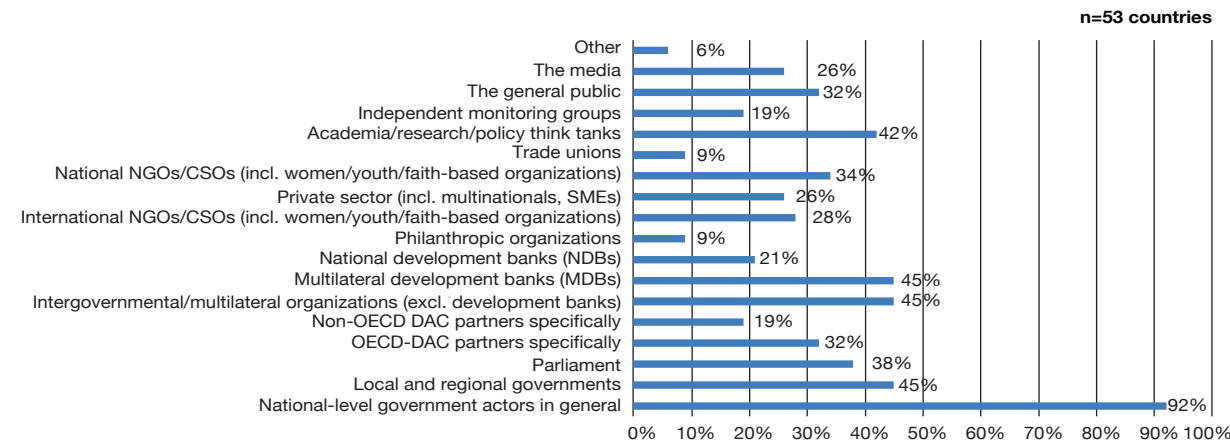
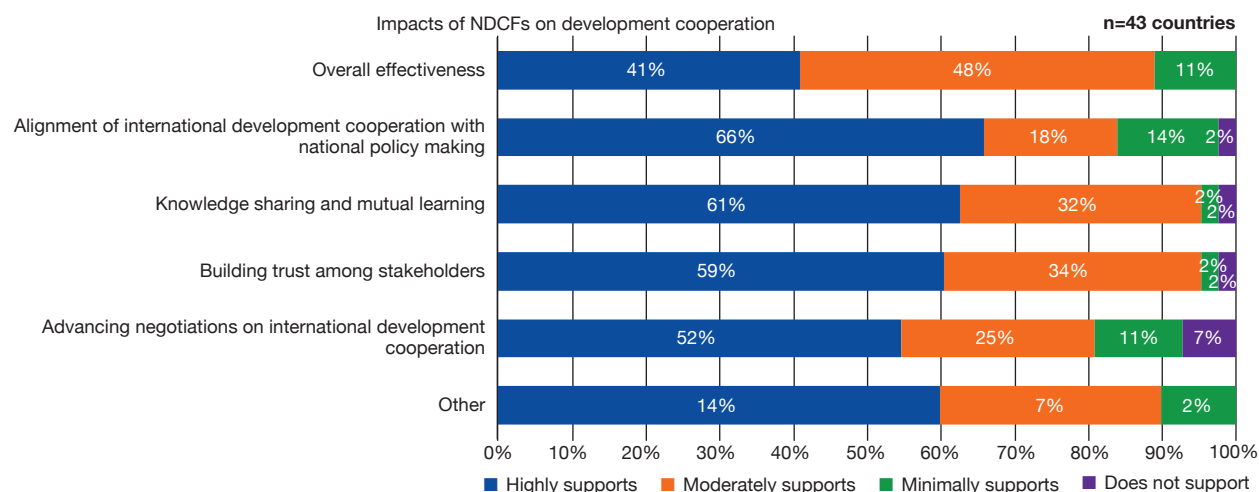


Figure 20: Impacts of NDCFs on development cooperation: 2024/2025



In 2024, 63 per cent of respondent countries had NDCFs for engaging development cooperation stakeholders while 37 per cent had other less centralized platforms they used to engage stakeholders. Most of the NDCFs (93 per cent) were chaired by senior government officials and 75 per cent had dedicated secretariats to support the work of the NDCF.

Respondent countries assessed the overall effectiveness of their National Development Cooperation Forum (NDCF) positively in 2024. Of the countries

with NDCFs, 41 per cent assessed their NDCFs as highly supportive in achieving its overall purpose and 48 per cent assessed their NDCFs as moderately supportive in achieving their overall purpose. Only 11 per cent of respondent countries indicated that their NDCFs were minimally supportive in achieving their overall purpose. Specifically, respondent countries assessed their NDCFs as highly supportive of alignment of international development cooperation with national policies (66 per cent), knowledge sharing and

Figure 21: Extent of involvement of development cooperation actors in NDCFs: 2024/2025

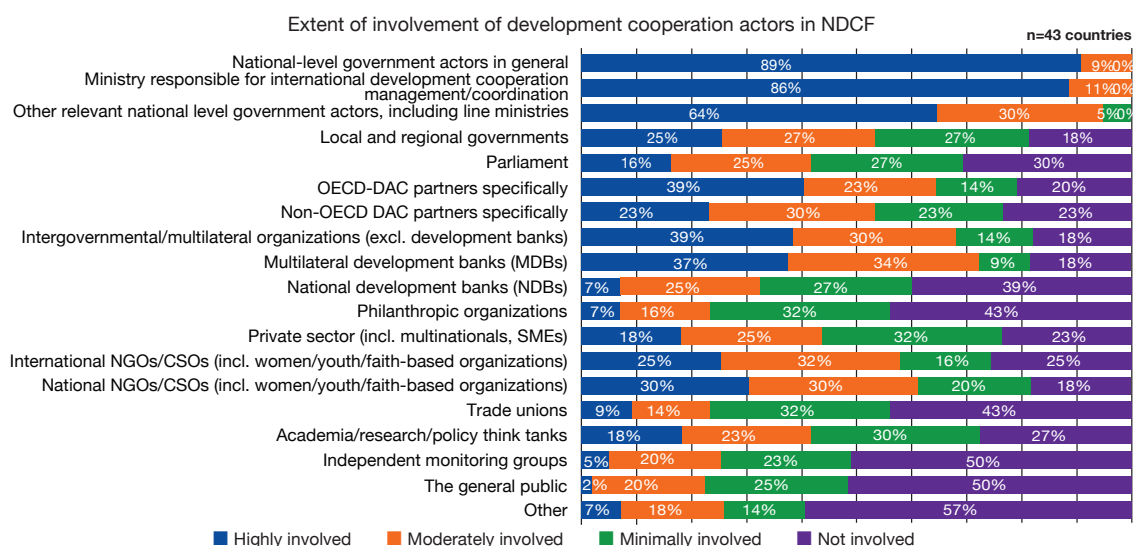
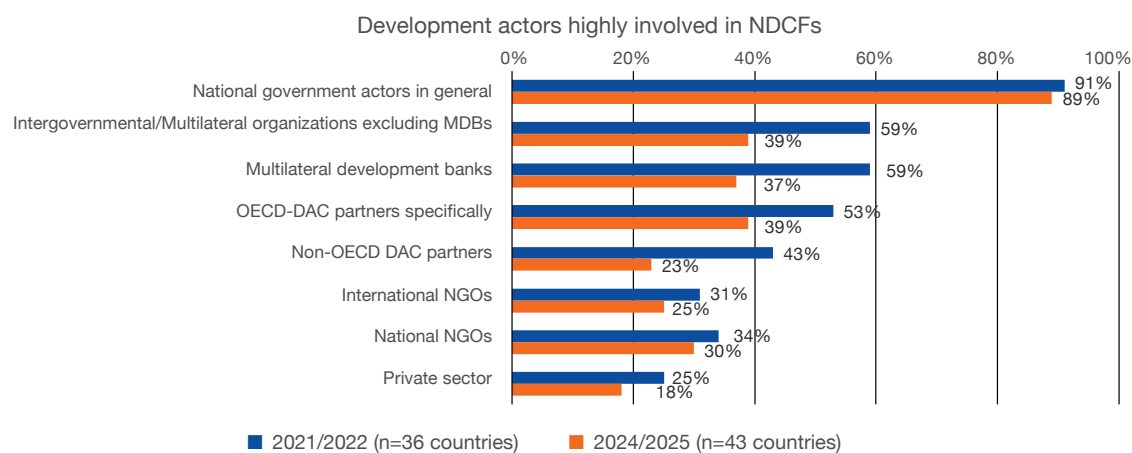


Figure 22: Development actors highly involved in NDCFs: 2021/2022 and 2024/2025



mutual learning (61 per cent), building trust among stakeholders (59 per cent) and advancing negotiations on development cooperation (52 per cent) (Figure 20).

In the 2024/2025 DCF survey, respondent countries assessed national government actors as highly involved in NDCFs (89 per cent). However, international organizations (multilateral organizations, multilateral development banks, OECD-DAC partners) are involved in NDCFs to a lesser extent than their government counterparts. Other development actors, namely non-OECD-DAC partners, national NGOs, international NGOs, independent monitoring groups the private sector, philanthropic organizations, academia and trade unions, are not as involved as government and international organizations (multilateral and bilateral).

Further analysis shows that in 2024, a lower percentage of development actors were highly involved in NDCFs compared to the 2022 DCF survey results. The decline is noticeable for multilateral organizations, multi-lateral development banks, OECD-DAC partners and non-OECD-DAC partners (Figure 22). Multilateral development banks and multilateral organizations were highly involved in 59 per cent of NDCFs in 2022, and this declined to 37 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively. There was also a decline in the percentage of NDCFs with highly involved OECD-DAC partners, from 53 per cent in 2022 to 39 per cent in 2024, and non-OECD-DAC partners from 43 per cent in 2022 to 23 per cent in 2024.

One of the possible reasons for the decline in ‘highly involved’ may be that the 2021/2022 DCF survey was

conducted during the COVID-19 recovery period when NDCFs were leveraged to mobilize support from a wide range of development actors. The same level of intensity has not been sustained in the post-COVID period.

The effective functioning of NDCFs is hindered by fragmentation of development cooperation responsibilities within governments of developing countries and limited capacity and resources of coordinating ministries.

One of the barriers to the effective functioning of NDCFs identified by respondent countries was the fragmentation of development cooperation responsibilities within their governments resulting from an ever more fragmented international development cooperation landscape. In some instances, responsibility for coordination of international development cooperation was split between two ministries and the respective roles and responsibilities of these ministries were not articulated clearly in relevant policies or legal frameworks. There was further fragmentation of development cooperation with different sector ministries coordinating development cooperation in isolation of the NDCF. The lack of follow-up on commitments made at NDCF, the limited capacity and resources to facilitate dialogue, high staff turnover, and the politicization of NDCFs were among the other barriers mentioned by some respondent countries.

3.7 Progress and barriers to effective development cooperation

Political will and country ownership remain the key drivers of positive change at the country level in effectiveness of international development cooperation.

In 2024, 83 per cent of respondent countries identified political will and country ownership as one of three most important factors driving positive changes in development cooperation in their countries (Figure 23). These factors have been increasing steadily over the past three DCF surveys. This demonstrates the priority which developing countries are giving to improve the effectiveness and impact of development cooperation. As many as 60 per cent of respondent countries identified new or improved coordination mechanisms as a third main factor positive change. The positive assessment of the impact of NDCFs affirms the importance of this enabler for effective development cooperation, especially when its functions are linked with and supported by country results frameworks and effective development cooperation information systems.

Results-based approaches focus on achieving measurable results and impact, and they require the setting of clear objectives and a framework for monitoring progress and measuring the achievement of results. In 2024, 56 per cent of countries identified results-based approaches as one of the three main factors in driving positive changes in development cooperation in their countries, though the percentage is lower than in the 2021/2022 DCF survey.

Insufficient financial resources, the unavailability of quality data, and international development cooperation partners' practices were the three most frequently mentioned barriers to strengthening the enablers of development cooperation.

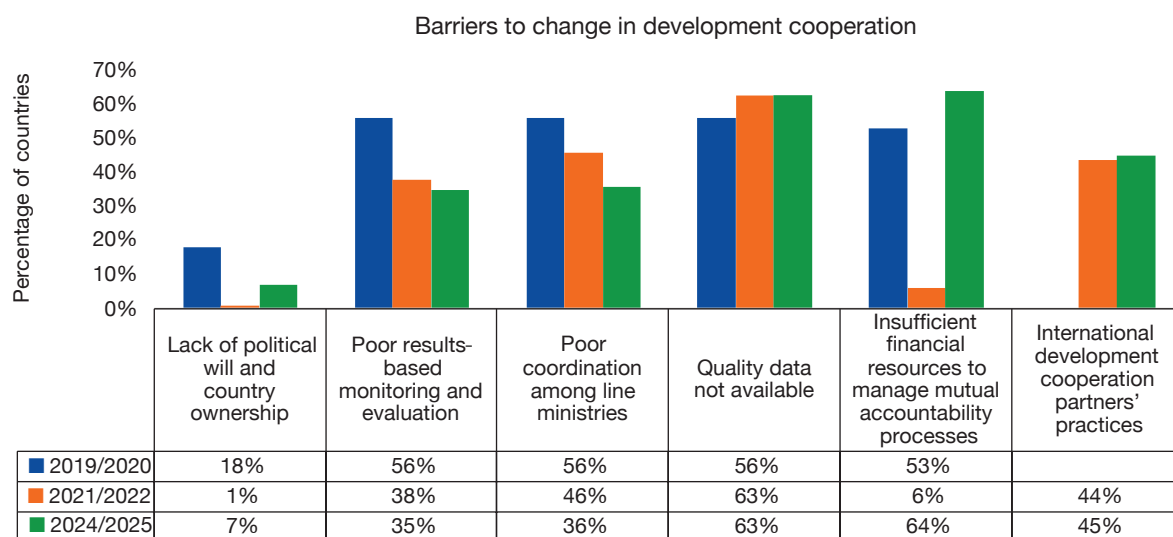
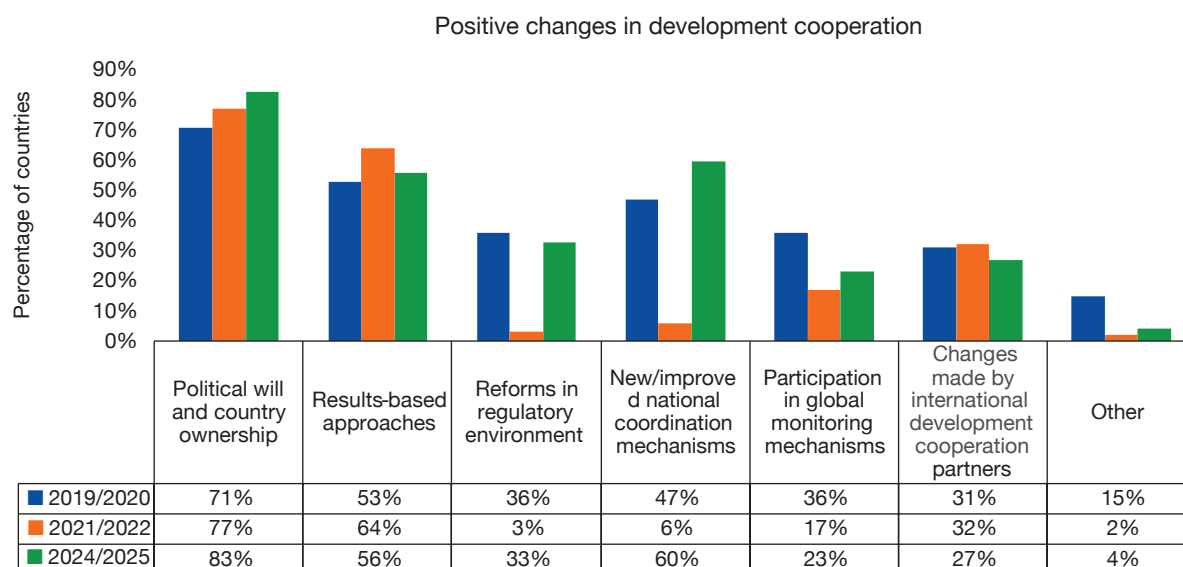
In the 2024 DCF survey, the lack of sufficient resources for managing development cooperation was the 'top' barrier to change identified by 64 per cent of countries. From the qualitative responses to the survey and the interviews, the lack of financial resources referred to the lack of finance required for: convening regular stakeholder engagements and consultations; having sufficient staff in coordinating ministries to

mobilise, coordinate and track development cooperation; upgrading DCIS; and commissioning evaluations of development cooperation.

The lack of quality data on development cooperation has been a recurring theme over DCF surveys, yet there appears to have been little or no improvement. In 2024, 63 per cent of respondent countries identified the lack of quality data as one of the three main barriers to change in development cooperation. Countries most frequently requested capacity support for strengthening data, statistics and information systems. The absence of a strong, effective DCIS may also contribute to reluctance on the part of development partners to directly report into country-owned systems.

Development partner practices are still a main barrier to change in development cooperation for 45 per cent of respondent countries. The lack of completeness of information from development partners, limited coordination amongst development partners, bypassing national systems, lack of sufficient alignment with national priorities, and the diversity and complexity of reporting requirements were among the disabling practices identified by interviewed countries. Developing countries also noted the reluctance on the part of some non-traditional donors to participate in round-table discussions, share data or align with national development priorities.

Figure 23: Positive changes and barriers to change in development cooperation: 2019/2020 - 2024/2025



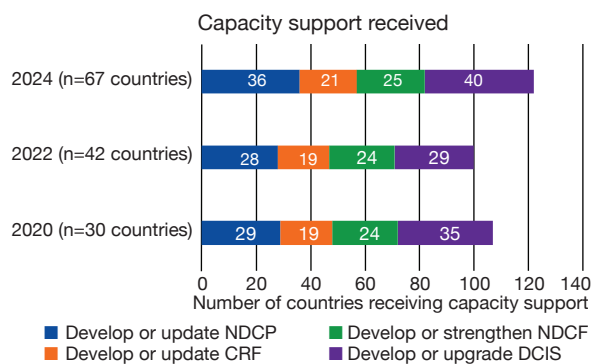
4.0 Capacity support

4.1 Capacity support for strengthening key enablers

In past DCF surveys, several countries identified lack of capacity to develop the key enablers or strengthen existing enablers of effective development cooperation. Capacity support to these countries is therefore essential. It enables developing countries to strengthen their national systems to help them mobilize and manage development cooperation more effectively and efficiently. This, in turn, contributes to improving the quality, effectiveness, and impact of international development cooperation. Ultimately, it supports countries in achieving their national sustainable development priorities. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda commits Member States to, among other things, promote country ownership and strengthen country systems to improve the quality, effectiveness and impact of international development cooperation. Capacity support to strengthen the key enablers of development cooperation will go a long way towards national ownership and leadership of international development cooperation agenda by developing countries.

Over the period 2019/2020 to 2024/2025, developing countries received capacity support to

Figure 24: Capacity support received for strengthening key enablers: 2019/2020 - 2024/2025



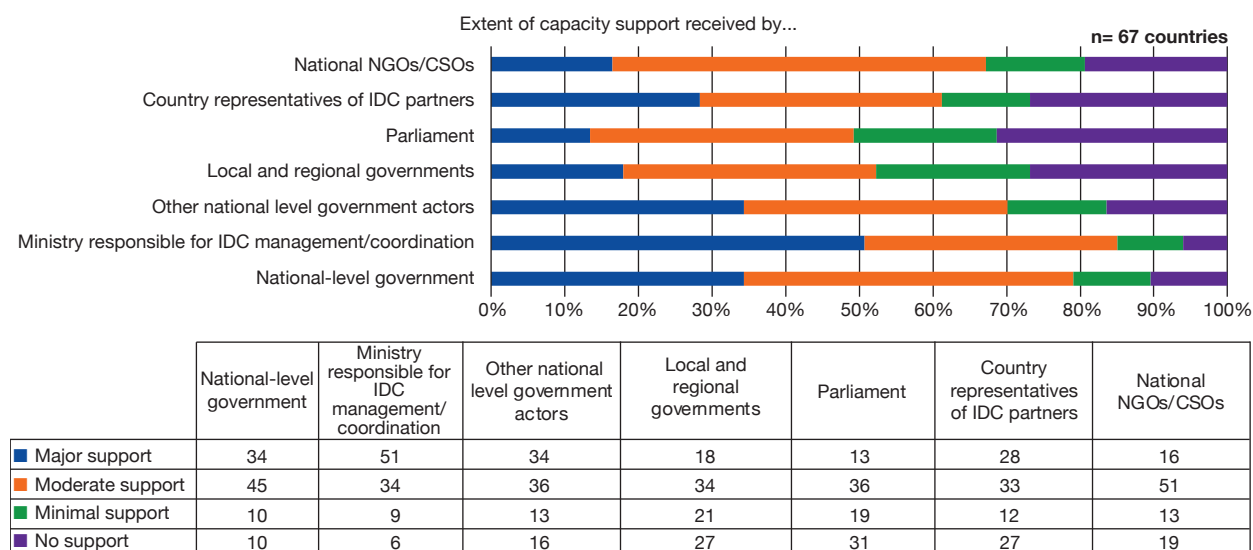
strengthen the enablers, most frequently for NDCPs and DCIS. In 2024/2025, 67 countries responded that they had received capacity support to strengthen key enablers. Of these, 36 countries (60 per cent) reported that they had received capacity support to develop or upgrade their DCIS and 36 countries (54 per cent) reported that they had received capacity support to develop or update their NDCPs. Respondent countries also received capacity support to develop or update CRFs (25 countries – 37 per cent) and to develop or strengthen NDCFs (21 countries – 31 per cent) (Figure 24).

Twenty-three respondent countries also received financial and technical support in related areas, for example, support to enhance national monitoring and evaluation capacities, conducting a mid-term review of the development cooperation framework, capacity building in project cycle management and public policy analysis, bilateral workshops on good practices for measuring development cooperation, innovation in information systems, implementation of Voluntary National Review recommendations, and monitoring and review of development cooperation.

Major capacity support has consistently focused on the national ministries responsible for the coordination of international development cooperation, given their roles and responsibilities in the area. Major capacity support has also been directed to the national level of governments. In 2024/2025, 51 per cent of coordination ministries received major capacity support and a further 34 per cent received moderate capacity support. In the case of national-level governments 34 per cent received major support and 45 per cent received moderate support (Figure 25).

Past DCF surveys noted the need to improve capacity support to local and regional governments given their role in the 2030 Agenda and Addis Ababa Action Agenda as implementers and local development policy making. It also noted the need to improve capacity support to parliaments given their important

Figure 25: Extent of capacity support received by development actors: 2024/2025



role as legislators and providing oversight of national budgets. There has been some improvement in the level of capacity support given to parliaments and to sub-national governments. In the 2021/2022 DCF survey only 4 per cent of respondent countries reported that local/regional governments had received major capacity support, while in the 2024 survey, 18 per cent of respondent countries reported that local/regional governments had received major capacity support. In the case of parliaments, 13 per cent of respondent countries reported major capacity support to parliaments in 2024, compared to 8 per cent in the previous DCF survey.

There is a need for additional capacity support for strengthening all key enablers and their inter-linkages as well as for strengthening functional skills. Developing countries identified diverse areas where capacity support was needed.

Countries requested capacity support related to their DCIS (17 per cent of responses). This support included upgrading existing DCIS, strengthening data quality, strengthening data governance frameworks, and strengthening ICT infrastructure. It also included strengthening capacities for data analysis and reporting.

Respondent countries identified the lack of sufficient financial and human resources to mobilize and manage development cooperation as a major challenge and requested capacity support to address it. They identified the need for capacity support to mobilize

development cooperation, including financial development cooperation.

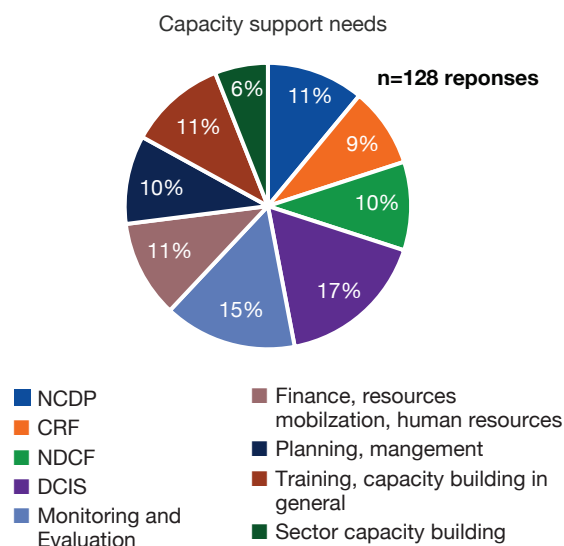
Countries requested capacity support for NDCPs (10 per cent of responses). In most instances, the support was requested to review and update existing NDCPs and additional human resources to support the implementation of their NDCPs (11 per cent of responses)

Capacity support for NDCFs (10 per cent of responses) was mainly for improving the functioning of existing NDCFs. The support requested included strengthening skills of secretariat staff to plan effective dialogues and advise their principals on issues for discussion in dialogues, how to integrate sub-national governments and non-state actors into NDCFs and reviewing NDCFs to improve the governance of NDCFs.

Several countries expressed the need for support to develop their CRFs (10 per cent of responses). Specific areas identified for capacity support in CRFs included tracking of climate finance, indicator development, and institutionalizing CRFs. As in the 2021/2022 DCF survey, the need for capacity support in monitoring and evaluation was the second largest percentage of needs expressed (15 per cent of responses). The support requested included training and grants to develop instruments to evaluate the impact of development cooperation on the country, results-based monitoring, and project performance monitoring.

Other capacity support identified was training and

Figure 26: Capacity support needs identified by respondent countries: 2024/2025



capacity building in general, with the view to strengthening country institutions (11 per cent of responses) and capacity building in specific areas such as resilience, disaster risk reduction, and energy (6 per cent of responses).

Interviewed countries identified the need for increased support for capacity building and emphasized the importance of strengthening country capabilities to manage and implement development, with a view to long-term sustainability.

Developing countries identified capacity support needs beyond strengthening the key enablers of effective development cooperation.

Low-income countries emphasized the importance of strengthening country capacities in technical skills, institutional frameworks and human resources, while lower middle-income countries emphasized the importance of technical assistance that is relevant and responsive to their specific contexts and challenges. Upper middle-income countries emphasized the need for support in areas such as technology and innovation, knowledge transfer and the development of country expertise in critical sectors that will help them build long-term sustainability.

There were other specific areas that interviewed countries identified where capacity support was needed. In the area of climate finance, countries identified the need for support in accessing climate finance,

and designing, implementing and managing large-scale climate projects. They also identified capacity support in innovative finance, in particular blended finance and support for strengthening the measurement of SSCT.

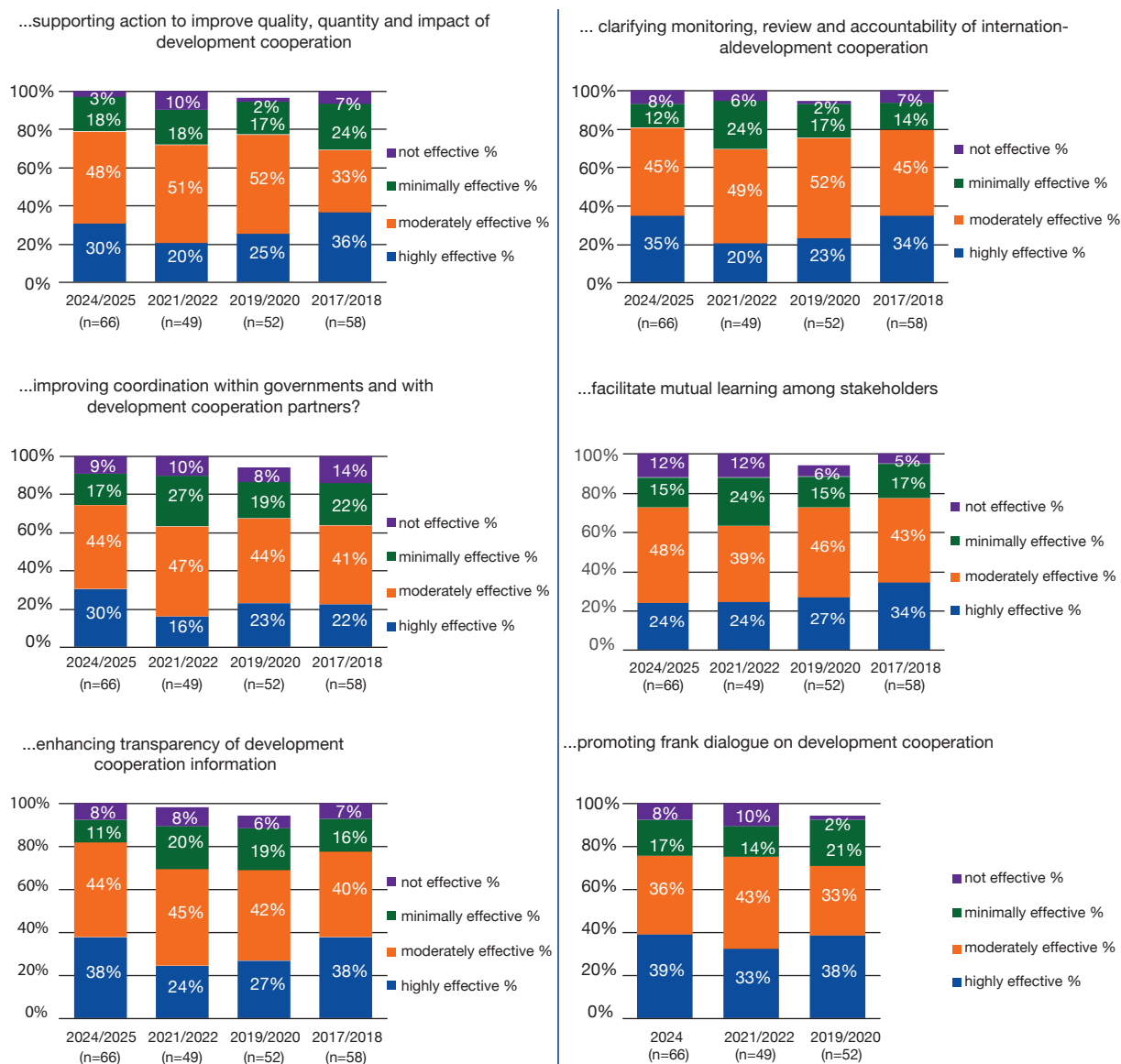
4.2 The DCF survey as a capacity support tool

The DCF survey is a voluntary self-assessment tool that provides developing countries the opportunity to reflect systematically on how the key enablers are supporting the effectiveness of development cooperation, identify gaps, and take action to address these gaps. As stated in the introduction to the 2024/2025 DCF survey study report, 83 per cent of countries that participated in the DCF survey had participated in at least one previous survey. The willingness of an increasing number of countries to participate in interviews in addition to completing the survey is indicative of the perceived benefit that developing countries derive from participation. Participation in the DCF survey is another means of capacity support to developing countries to strengthen their key enablers of development cooperation.

The past four DCF surveys have been highly or moderately effective as a capacity support tool for developing countries to develop insights on their key enablers and catalyse action to strengthen these key enablers. On nearly all the dimensions assessed (Figure 27) more than two-thirds of countries participating in the DCF surveys since 2017/2018 assessed the DCF surveys as highly effective or moderately effective. The DCF surveys have been highly or moderately effective in:

- supporting action to improve the quality, quantity and impact of development cooperation (range 69% -78%)
- clarifying monitoring, review and accountability of international development cooperation (range 69% - 80%)
- improving coordination within governments and with development cooperation partners (range 63% -77%)
- facilitating mutual learning among stakeholders (range 63% - 77 %)
- enhancing transparency of development cooperation information (range 69% -82%)
- promoting frank dialogue on development cooperation (range 71% - 76%)

Figure 27: Developing countries' assessment of the effectiveness of the DCF survey in...



5.0 Conclusion

Developing countries have made progress in strengthening the enablers of effective development cooperation but are challenged by more fragmented international development cooperation, global crises and emerging risks.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has served as a major catalyst for developing countries to move from 'aid' to 'development cooperation' and strengthening the development cooperation enablers at country level. The biennial DCF surveys too have contributed to building a solid evidence base on the key enablers of effective development cooperation and have provided developing countries with the opportunity for reflection on the key enablers and identifying actions to strengthen these. The 2024/2025 survey found evidence of progress made by developing countries in strengthening their key enablers of development cooperation. However, the challenges of climate change and global conflicts, the unmet commitments by developed countries, concerns about unsustainable debt, and fragmentation of development cooperation are hampering progress. Developing countries that participated in the 2024/2025 survey are calling for changes in the international development cooperation architecture, including the reform of global financial institutions.

The key enablers of effective development cooperation remain relevant. These enablers have demonstrated their value as tools for improving the quality, effectiveness and impact of development cooperation. With the changes in the global context, the enablers should be refined and additional tools added to the toolbox of enablers.

Developing countries that participated in the 2024/2025 DCF survey affirmed the relevance of the key enablers of effective development cooperation, demonstrating how they have used these enablers at country level to enhance the effectiveness of development cooperation. The request for additional capacity support to strengthen these enablers is further testimony to their relevance.

The enablers should be enhanced to reflect the realities of the changes in the global context. Consideration should be given to reflecting climate-related financing

and climate-related indicators in NDCPs and strengthening results frameworks.

Since the 2015/2016 DCF survey, political will and country ownership have been consistently identified as the main factors in positive change in development cooperation at country level. Consideration should be given to including political will (or political commitment) and country ownership and leadership as cross-cutting enablers of effective development cooperation.

Capacity support for strengthening enablers remains important element of the key enabler toolbox and developing countries should be supported to strengthen their capacities and capabilities. United Nations agencies are well placed to provide capacity support in functional areas such as monitoring and evaluation and institutional strengthening of coordinating ministries. In addition to capacity support to strengthen key enablers, developing countries also need capacity support to explore innovative financing mechanisms, access climate finance, and measurement of South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

The United Nations is a key institution in the international development architecture. Developing countries expect the United Nations to play a decisive role in bringing coherence to the international development architecture.

The United Nations should continue to advocate for adherence to development cooperation commitments and principles of global agendas, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries and principles of South-South cooperation. It should also consider advocating for reducing complexity of procedures for accessing development finance. This would reduce the high transaction costs for developing countries, especially smaller countries with limited capacity.

The United Nations development system at country level can contribute to reducing fragmentation of development cooperation by supporting developing countries to strengthen their coordination structures and systems, and development cooperation forums at national and subnational levels.

The United Nations development system should continue to strengthen internal coherence at the country level through the development of UNSDCFs that provide incentives for inter-agency collaboration and joint programming, as well as common business processes and practices. It should also consider simplifying procedures to reduce transaction costs for government partners.

The biennial DCF surveys have built a body of empirical evidence of the experiences of developing countries in managing development cooperation. The DCF survey is a useful self-assessment tool for developing countries and should be retained and improved.

Self-assessment is a valuable tool for countries to reflect on their development cooperation in a way that

is non-judgemental and encourages behaviour change through learning. An unprecedented number of developing countries participated in the 2024/2025 survey and follow-up interviews. The survey and interviews were voluntary and the 55 per cent response rate to the survey indicates that developing countries view the DCF survey as useful.

Developing countries should be supported to convene an inclusive process with key stakeholders to complete the survey. This can promote mutual understanding between governments, development partners and other stakeholders, strengthen alignment of development cooperation with national priorities, and strengthen coherence of the development cooperation architecture at country level.

Details of the 2024/2025 DCF survey

The 2024/2025 DCF survey was run over a 6-month period and was available in English, French and Spanish as in previous years. Developing countries were invited to participate in the online survey and also received hard copies of the questionnaire to use in preparation for the online submission.

In keeping with ethical standards for monitoring and evaluation, countries participating in the survey were given assurances of confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. They were also encouraged to consult national and sub-national government institutions, international development cooperation partners, and domestic non-state actors when completing the survey.

The survey is a self-assessment by developing countries on the state of effectiveness in international development cooperation, organized in terms of key enablers and the capacity support received to strengthen these enablers. The questions were identical to the surveys conducted in 2019/2020 and 2021/2022, apart from the special module on the COVID-19 pandemic covered only in the 2021/2022 survey. This has enabled comparisons across the three surveys. Two-thirds of the questionnaire used closed questions requiring yes or no responses, rating scales and multiple-choice questions. Open-ended questions were designed for respondents to contextualize and elaborate on their responses.

A total of 75 developing countries participated in the 2024/2025 survey, most coming from the African region and the Asia-Pacific region. Participation from the Africa region has been consistent since 2017/2018.

The representation of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) has been consistent over the three DCF surveys. In terms of World Bank income classification, the 2024/2025 DCF survey has a higher representation of low-in-

come countries, and a lower representation of upper middle-income countries compared to previous DCF surveys.

Follow-up interviews of participant countries

The survey data was complemented by interviews of 28 participant countries that consented to the interviews. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed to ensure that interviewees could express their views frankly. The interviews were conducted in English, French and Spanish, depending on the choice of participants. The countries that volunteered for the interviews came from the Africa region, the Asia Pacific region and the Latin America and Caribbean region. There were no volunteers from the Eastern European region. The interviews invited developing countries' views on key challenges and emerging issues affecting international development cooperation, what was working best and what could be strengthened at country level, how developing countries are managing development cooperation, and concrete recommendations for improving the quality, effectiveness and impact of international development cooperation.

A note on interpreting the survey results

Countries participating in the DCF survey are encouraged to consult stakeholders when preparing their inputs for the survey. In the 2024/2025 survey 35 per cent of countries consulted stakeholders, and these were mainly national government partners and domestic stakeholders. The survey responses may therefore reflect predominantly government views on development cooperation. It should also be borne in mind that the DCF survey represents the status of and perspectives on key enablers at the time of the survey, and circumstances in some countries may have changed since then.

Table 2: Share of participation in DCF surveys by region: 2015/2016 to 2024/2025

Region	2015/2016	2017/2018	2019/2020	2021/2022	2024/2025
Africa	57%	43%	42%	40%	40%
Asia-Pacific	29%	29%	22%	21%	32%
Eastern Europe	7%	9%	9%	8%	5%
Latin America and Caribbean	7%	19%	27%	32%	23%
TOTAL (All participants countries)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 3: Classification of participant countries: 2019/2020 - 2024/2025

Income	LDC	SIDS	HIC	UMIC	LMIC	LIC
2019/2020 (n=55)	38%	20%	9%	27%	42%	22%
2021/2022 (n=53)	40%	25%	6%	43%	30%	21%
2024/2025 (n=75)	40%	23%	8%	36%	32%	24%

End Notes

- ¹ UNECOSOC, *National mutual accountability and transparency in development cooperation: Study on the findings of the Fifth DCF Survey*, 2018.
- ² United Nations, *2019 Financing for Sustainable Development Report*, New York, 2019.
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