

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Development Cooperation Forum
High-Level Symposium on “Accountable and effective
development cooperation in a post-2015 era”
Berlin, March 20-21, 2014

José Antonio Ocampo
Natalie Gómez Arteaga

Columbia University

The Global Partnership for Development and the scope of Development Cooperation

The **Global Partnership** involves a broad set of commitments, which are essentially aimed at reducing international inequalities among countries and, particularly, the asymmetries that characterize the international economic system

- **Development Cooperation “in the narrow sense”:** technical cooperation and financial flows (concessional financial flows in particular).
- **Development Cooperation “in the broader sense”:** in addition, the *rules* that govern global finance, trade, and technology generation and transfer, among others (the “enabling environment” for development).

The Concept of Accountability

Dimensions

- **Answerability:** the obligation to inform, explain and justify decisions and actions
- **Enforcement:** the capacity of accounting agencies to impose sanctions on public sector officials who violate their duties
- Clear delimitation of **responsibility:** the requirement that all actors should have clearly defined duties and performance standards.

Modalities

- **Vertical Accountability:** based on a principal-agent type of relation (elections as the best example).
- **Horizontal Accountability:** checks and balances in the exercise of political power + oversight by specialized institutions
- **Social Accountability:** control exercised by multiple civil society organization and independent media on public sector officials

Constraints to the application of this concept at the international level

1. Vertical and horizontal accountability are absent at the international level.
2. Enforcement is almost impossible.
3. At the international level most commitments are only voluntary and thus non-binding; so, in a way, there is nothing to enforce.
4. Who is responsible for what is not always clear, especially in a multi-stakeholder framework.

But answerability is applicable at the international level, and responsibility can be made to apply

Vertical accountability is absent, but some forms of horizontal accountability are present. And social accountability plays a crucial role, given the limitations of other modalities.

The way forward

Main challenges

1. It is essential to move from monitoring/surveillance (with a clear “institutional home”) to **stronger modalities of horizontal accountability** -peer reviews and mutual accountability (MA)— and, at least in some cases, to **strict compliance mechanisms**.
2. Domestic counterparts are essential, including strong government capacities in partner countries and giving **national parliaments a central role** in accountability exercises.
3. **Strong, autonomous and impartial Secretariats** of international organizations are also essential. Surveillance must be “even-handed” to balance intrinsic asymmetries of power between actors.
4. **Social accountability plays a central role**, and must be strengthened with a clear link to national mechanisms.

The way forward: A triangular, multi-layered architecture

Three components of triangular cooperation:

North-South: MA is still asymmetric and thus weak in promoting horizontal accountability from an “equal actors” basis. Also, coherence with national domestic accountability mechanisms is still weak; almost no clear links between MA and domestic accountability mechanisms are defined.

South-South Cooperation: Accountability among SSC is still new. Responsibilities and explicit commitments must be defined. A peer review could have positive results.

Non-governmental actors: Should be guided by the same principles of donor countries in relation to partner countries. The challenge remains on how to align principles and standards with wider development results, and with explicit responsibilities. CSOs play a double role, demanding accountability by social accountability but must themselves be accountable.

The way forward: A triangular, multi-layered architecture

- The basic point of departure in all cases should be ***explicit agreements*** on principles, commitments and standards of development cooperation
- The triangular accountability architecture should ***build upon existing frameworks***, and enhance their linkages and complementarities. The *International Development Cooperation Report* should become the main global accountability report at the global level.
- The accountability mechanism should aim at ***creating credible incentives***. This would always be a challenge given the inherently weak nature of international accountability frameworks. Creating credible incentives also requires, going beyond common principles and goals. Defining responsibility
- The triangular architecture should be ***multi-layered***. Aside from global processes, regional ones could be put in place, including peer-review processes but, in particular, ***strengthening the links with national counterparts is essential***.

The way forward: Other crucial elements

- A shared agenda is not enough. A document with explicit guiding principles and, whenever possible, with specific responsibilities and associated targets and indicators, is needed, with a focus on results. This is essential to define responsibility for accountability “by whom” and “over what”.
- A “data revolution” is essential, both for research and results-oriented monitoring. But, more than sophisticated data for policy analysis (e.g., innovative composite indicators or experimental surveys), the priority should be quality information about public sector spending and services, and basic data on economic and social indicators from national statistical offices of the developing countries that lack them.

Back to the “broader sense” of Development Cooperation

For development cooperation “in the broader sense”, accountability frameworks should also be put in place, especially in the framework of the post-2015 agenda.

The best way forward would be the design of a strong follow-up mechanism of the Monterrey Consensus and associated processes that would replace the extremely weak one that was put in place over the past long decade. This issue should be at the center of the forthcoming follow-up Conference on Financing for Development.

A clear link between both mechanisms of accountability, in the narrow and broader sense, should be created.