WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A whole range of ministries and public institutions mobilise expertise and resources for development. They fund bilateral programmes, offer peer-to-peer assistance, support multilateral organisations and oversee domestic policies with significant impact on developing countries.

Good co-ordination is vital. Without it, inconsistent standards and policies, lack of transparency, missed opportunities and inefficiencies can all ensue. If done well, governments can combine their assets and maximise their contribution to global sustainable development.

Public institutions mobilise their expertise and resources for global sustainable development.

They co-ordinate their efforts, create synergies and address overlaps and inconsistencies.

The quantity and quality of development co-operation partnerships and policies grow.

The country’s bilateral and multilateral engagement has a greater impact on sustainable development.
BASIC STANDARDS

Development co-operation standards apply to all parts of government.

The principles of effective development co-operation set out the quality standards for all development co-operation. All ministries and public institutions need to respect country ownership, focus on results, support inclusive partnerships, and guarantee transparency and mutual accountability.

OECD-DAC legal instruments apply to all ministries engaging in development co-operation, for instance the Recommendations on Untying Official Development Assistance and Terms and Conditions of Aid.

Some OECD-DAC recommendations specifically underscore the importance of cross-government efforts: ensuring policy coherence for sustainable development; joined-up humanitarian, development and peace actions; and cross-government efforts to fight corrupt practices.

The OECD DAC Peer Review Analytical Framework highlights the need for a top-level policy framework, a designated point of leadership, and clear, complementary mandates, responsibilities and accountabilities.
Development policy draws on cross-government expertise and steers all effort

Strategies rely on the expertise of key government institutions and reflect their roles and comparative advantages, setting out common objectives, individual actions and areas of collaboration.

- For each SDG, Sweden’s policy for global development sets out the international contribution of Swedish institutions, with more details in dedicated policies such as on global health, while its multilateral development policy also determines how to co-ordinate efforts across government.

- Ireland and Portugal’s top level development co-operation strategies are adopted by government, highlighting the responsibilities of all ministries.

- Denmark and New Zealand’s country strategies set out how the government as a whole contributes to the sustainable development of their partner countries.

- France’s Action Plan for international migration and development determines domestic and international actions and was co-designed by key ministries together with non-governmental stakeholders.

- A United States’ Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad obliges all agencies to develop strategies for integrating climate considerations into their international work.
Institutional settings enable good collaboration

Independent of the institutional model, government actors have clear, complementary mandates, responsibilities and accountabilities. Co-ordination mechanisms at different levels enable consultation and joint decision making. Comprehensive information is publicly available.

- In Korea, regular meetings of the Committee for International Development Co-operation (CIDC), led by the Prime Minister’s Office, provide policy steer for co-operation by more than 40 agencies.
- In Belgium, informal cross-ministerial task forces help co-ordinate support to different fragile contexts; in the case of Mali, these also span headquarters and the embassy.
- Joint board representation by Denmark’s ministries of Environment and Foreign Affairs underpin strong engagement with the Green Climate Fund, drawing on both ministries’ networks and expertise.
- In United States embassies, all co-operation agencies present in the country co-ordinate their activities around shared objectives set out in the whole-of-mission Integrated Country Strategy.
- DevTracker collates easy-access information on official development assistance (ODA) from all the United Kingdom’s departments.
- Norway’s Knowledge Bank is a dedicated institutional resource to support, quality assure and learn from the technical co-operation of 35 public institutions.
GOOD PRACTICES

Across government, resources and expertise are mobilised for sustainable development

Development financing instruments draw on institutions with relevant expertise, and all government institutions provide financing of high quality. Non-ODA financing to developing countries has adequate safeguards and is geared towards sustainable development.

- Ireland’s multilateral operational framework commits the government to providing core and flexible funding, including multi-annual and pooled contributions, to all multilateral partners where possible.
- Spain has dedicated mechanisms to co-ordinate and facilitate the mobilisation of public sector expertise, New Zealand has a facility to source technical assistance from its local governments.
- A cross-government Peace and Stabilisation Fund in Denmark combines ODA and non-ODA resources, supporting an integrated response to complex challenges. A similar tool exists in the United Kingdom.
- To draw on non-ODA development resources, Finland’s Finfund applies an impact assessment for private sector financing, Canada has integrated the SDGs into its export credit work, Norway’s Pension Fund Global uses guidelines for ethical and sustainable investments, and Luxembourg has a dedicated initiative to promote sustainable finance.
All co-operation is subject to quality assurance, monitoring and learning

Quality assurance, monitoring and evaluations enhance and track the effectiveness of development co-operation across government.

- To provide feedback on design and quality, Portugal requires that all public co-operation projects receive prior approval from the co-operation agency Camões.

- Germany’s evaluation institute DEVal undertakes evaluations that cut across ministries and instruments. The UK’s oversight body ICAI reflects the actions of various departments in its reviews. Responses are provided by all departments concerned on behalf of the UK government.

- A range of ministries in Austria have jointly developed an evaluation policy to ensure evaluations follow similar standards.

- In their partner country strategies, Denmark and New Zealand track how all national efforts contribute to development objectives using SDG indicators, making mutual accountability easier.
MEASURING SUCCESS

Co-ordination across government is effective when:

- Each ministry has defined its contribution to global sustainable development and mobilises necessary resources and expertise.
- Key strategies and policies draw on the full range of expertise from across government.
- Institutions’ efforts and programmes are complementary and create synergies with those of others.
- Partners have a good understanding of the full co-operation offer of any one country and can easily navigate their interaction with government.
RESOURCES

• An OECD guidance note on policy coherence for sustainable development provides examples of government co-ordination and stakeholder consultation mechanisms.

• An OECD Insight Brief on working across government expands on some of the points included above.

• OECD research on engaging in fragile contexts, including the link between peace and development.

• Find relevant evaluations via the DAC Evaluation Resource Centre (DEReC).

Relevant topics in this series

Policy coherence for development is vital for coherent action across government.

Multilateral partnerships: these often involve many ministries, thus requiring co-ordination.

Cities and regions are other public institutions engaged in development co-operation.

Engaging in fragile contexts requires co-ordinated development, peace and humanitarian action.

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This series unpacks development co-operation standards and illustrates how DAC members are applying them. Applying standards can help all actors to fulfil their ambitions and commitments.

Each Fundamentals document introduces a key aspect of effective development co-operation, sets out basic standards, offers good practice examples, and identifies relevant resources.

Other topics in this series, which will be expanded and updated over time, can be found on the Development Co-operation TIPs • Tools Insights Practices peer learning platform. For comments, contact DCD.TIPs@oecd.org.