

## Evaluation of Coordination and Complementarity of European Assistance to Local Development

This information brief presents the main findings of a joint-evaluation study focusing on the performance of European Member States and the European Commission with respect to their coordination of assistance to local development. Given the adoption of the EU Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour in May 2007, this study's main findings and recommendations can be useful in the context of the ongoing efforts to translate the EU's commitments into action.

### About this Evaluation Study

This evaluation is one of a series of joint evaluation studies that were initiated by the Heads of European Union Member States' evaluation services and the European Commission (EUHES). The evaluations aim at assessing the role played by the Maastricht Treaty precepts of coordination, complementarity and coherence in the European Commission (EC) and the EU Member States' development cooperation policies and operations.

This particular evaluation focused on coordination and complementarity of European assistance to local development and was performed by Baastel, a Canadian consultancy firm. It was managed by the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), and supported by the Evaluation Services of Austria, Belgium, France, Ireland, and the Netherlands.

Following an analysis of relevant EU systems, procedures and policies, four countries were selected for the case studies. The selection

was based on a typology that on one axis considered the capacity of recipient countries to manage their own local development and, on another axis, the complexity of donor systems in place. The four countries selected: Nicaragua, South Africa, Mozambique, and Indonesia each represents one of four 'types'

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### THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF COORDINATION ACTIVITIES IS VERY LOW

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of donor-recipient relationships as defined by the matrix, they were labelled respectively: donor-push, recipient-pull, emergent and mature. Besides the types of relationship that they represent, the countries were also chosen as they are priority countries for the EU's Official Development Assistance (ODA).

### Main Findings

Based on the analysis of the evidence that was collected, the evaluators identified the following five main findings:

The first main finding of this evaluation study is that the systems, behaviours and policies set up to manage the performance of coordination are very much *relationship- and context-based*. While this may seem to be an obvious conclusion, the evaluators found that present EU ODA delivery systems are not designed or managed to take this into account.

Furthermore, *coordination of EU (ODA) strategies and activities is not valued*; in all cases studied, European donors decided not to participate in coordination and complementarity-focused activities. Many of them however do participate in other non-EU frameworks that aim to guide coordination efforts. The potential benefits that could be gained from leveraging EU activities in each case were summarily discarded.

Realising that EU coordination management for ODA takes place in what is undoubtedly the most complex of all environments, *the management policies, systems, processes, tools and resources devoted to this function are totally inadequate*. While much effort (i.e., human time) is devoted to sharing information, the overall performance of coordination activities is very low.

The *coordination (complementarity) obligations of all EU-funded stakeholders are not well understood*, nor are they shared. There is much concern, on the part of recipient countries and donors alike, over the role of INGOs – their lack of integration into coordination mechanisms and the perceived absence of any accountability on their part, especially in view of the principles of the Maastricht Treaty but also those of the Paris Declaration.

Finally, the *positive effects and impacts of coordination on local development were negligible or marginal* at best. When viewed from a developmental perspective (e.g., in the end, poverty alleviation is a local effect), these findings give rise to considerable concern.

## Conclusions

Based on these main findings, the evaluators conclude that the European Union Member States and the Commission have a remarkably low level

of performance when it comes to achieving value added effects and impacts of coordination efforts with each other in general, and specifically in the area of support for local development. Given their behaviour, systems, procedures, insufficient devolution of decision-making and absence of management incentives for good coordination performance, the evaluators conclude that donors have created serious impediments to local ownership and have put in place important obstacles to aid effectiveness and balanced relationships based on mutual accountability.

The authors also argue that *complementarity should be considered an effect of good coordination* management practices and not an independent function. Complementarity should constitute a clear and explicit management objective for EU donors and cannot be reduced to the simple strategy of avoiding overlap in the ODA efforts between the Member States and the Commission.

### Suggested Key 'Enablers' and Main Ways Forward to Improve EU Coordination

The authors propose four general 'enablers' that need to be in place to ensure the effectiveness of efforts to further improve EU coordination:

1. A *strategic intent statement* establishing the principle of integrated approaches and strategies must be adopted at the highest levels of policy making within the EU;
2. A *professionalisation* of resources, activities and relationships to improve ODA coordination, and the implementation of a *systemic approach* to its organisation and management;
3. Third, a decision must be taken on the physical location of the *authority and responsibility for decision making* with respect to coordination, and all EU donors should follow the same delegation path. Field Delegations must be *empowered to make decisions* regarding the coordination of approaches and activities with others;
4. NGOs funded by the EU should be further promoted to improve their participation in coordination processes and *alignment of strategies and activities* to recipient country plans in accordance with EU strategies.

These four general enablers concern the 'foundation' for a systemic approach towards EU coordination of assistance to local development. Building on and integrating these four enablers, the authors propose the following six recommendations to further improve coordination and complementarity of European assistance to local development:

- Developing and agreeing on a *collective, shared approach to EU ODA coordination management*, to underline and support the 3C principles of the Maastricht Treaty.
- Putting in place a *clear mandate for the leadership that is required* for the development and implementation of transition strategies that will ensure that partner countries have the institutional capacity required to assume local ownership, including donor coordination;
- Developing and realising *appropriate organisations and approaches for professional management* of the ODA coordination function in each country, including *delegation of authority and resources to the field level*, under a paradigm of complementarity and coordination;
- Putting in place the information systems and tools required to improve the effect and impact of coordination;
- Develop and implement a *European Union based approach to supporting local development*, based on past experiences of coordination efforts, and including efforts made by NGO;
- Carrying out *complementary studies*, particularly into mutual accountability management and the relationship between EU donor coordination and that of the larger donor community, to support the management improvement thrust of the EU donors.

## Colofon

This series of **info briefs** is published in English with an accompanying website ([www.three-cs.net](http://www.three-cs.net)).

Each issue focuses on a specific theme relating to the 3Cs initiative of the Heads of Evaluation for External Cooperation of the EU Member States and the European Commission.

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## 3Cs Initiative

This initiative was launched by the Heads of Evaluation of the EU Member States and the European Commission.

## Comments, suggestions

Comments, suggestions and requests should be addressed to Niels Keijzer, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM).

Email: [three-cs@ecdpm.org](mailto:three-cs@ecdpm.org)

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