



10 tips on mutual accountability

These tips have been drafted to provide guidance and entry points for engagement on mutual accountability at the country level. Originally the tips were drafted from a donor perspective but they have been consulted with a number of partner countries. With broader feedback on the tips in the future, we hope to develop these into a set of joint guidance points.

- 1) Partner government leadership: Evidence suggests that where partner governments provide a strong lead in terms of the overall aid policy it is much easier to set up and implement mutual accountability mechanisms. If there is no overall aid framework donors should support partner Governments' efforts to put one in place. It should clearly spell out its vision and priorities for aid management and how aid fits into its broader development efforts. The framework could be contained in an aid policy document, a joint assistance strategy or another tool that identifies government's priorities on how donors should engage. Mutual accountability for results should be at the centre of the shared agenda. Clearly defined commitments on both sides, the rules of engagement and how progress will be monitored can be included. Donors should not crowd the agenda.
- 2) Strengthen National Capacity for ownership and leadership: In addition to donor control of financing, the inherently unequal relationship between donors and recipients is partly due in many cases to inadequate national capacity to lead and provide effective ownership of the development process. Government's commitments and efforts to strengthen national capacity for mutual accountability are crucial. Capacity strengthening is needed not only for public servants but also for parliamentary committees, local governments, civil society organisations and the media.
- 3) Strong domestic accountability leads to better mutual accountability: Avoid creating parallel or conflicting lines of accountability which undermines the accountability of the Government to its citizens. Assure that mutual accountability supports rather than undercuts domestic accountability institutions. Moreover, look at how domestic accountability and mutual accountability can reinforce each other. . One way of linking mutual and domestic accountability is to support meaningful and adequate involvement, as appropriate, of domestic stakeholders in joint technical working groups, budget support reviews, sector reviews, and monitoring of national development strategies and aid policies.
- 4) Donor PAFs. Donor "Performance Assessment Frameworks" (PAFs) which involve assessing individual donor performance on aid effectiveness commitments in a particular country can be a powerful tool to incentivise good behaviour amongst donor peers. Recent experience from Rwanda suggests that donor PAFs are most effective where there is strong Government leadership, and where these frameworks are applied to all donors, regardless of the aid modality used.

In the absence of a partner led process, donor *driven* "PAFs" can also have a positive effect on donor behaviour. In these environments, *peer pressure (including through "naming and shaming")* could also provide the right incentives for donors to implement their aid effectiveness commitments at the country level. This approach may be particularly useful in fragile states.

- 5) Build on mechanisms which already exist where feasible rather than inventing new ones. Recognise scarcity of resources of partners, and minimise burdens and demands on these resources by avoiding new time-consuming processes for partners. By strengthening the terms of reference for aid coordination arrangements existing mechanisms can become more “mutually” accountable. For example in Ghana, the consultative group meetings have been enhanced to include elements of mutual accountability. On the other hand, at times new mechanisms are needed, as in the case of the Mozambique PAF, or where the existing consultative group has outlived its usefulness.
- 6) Don't just focus on the national level – seek out opportunities at the sector level or at the local government level to advance mutual accountability. Mutual accountability is unlikely to be achieved through one mechanism or forum but instead requires an integrated network of relationships, commitments and accountability systems. Partner countries’ performances are often scrutinised extensively in various sector and budget review processes where there is little or no room to discuss donor performance and behaviour. Donors can engage at different levels to make the partnership more mutual – be it within a health sector dialogue, the framework of overall national policy or within a general budget support programme. At the sector level there may be opportunities to involve global funds in mutual accountability.
- 7) Where possible, make use of independent monitoring and evidence. Including information from civil society and parliaments in review processes can help provide objective independent evidence, increase transparency, and bring to bear important political points of view. Mutual accountability is, by its very nature, a political process rather than a technical exercise. In some cases it is useful to give an independent group a formalised advisory status, through an Independent Monitoring Group, (Vietnam and Tanzania are examples), which will promote an unbiased assessment on progress.
- 8) If necessary, start small and grow momentum over time. In environments with a large number of stakeholders, building up mutual accountability frameworks gradually amongst like-minded peers could be a way of avoiding the “lowest common denominator” amongst a very diverse group and strengthen capacity of partners to engage over time. In Mozambique, the Government progressively became more involved in the budget support donor mutual accountability mechanism, and has now showed interest to widen the framework to also include non-budget support donors. This approach should be a complement rather than substitute for efforts to increase the accountability of overall or sector level mutual accountability mechanisms.
- 9) Transparency is a powerful ingredient for mutual accountability. Comprehensive information on aid activities is crucial for partners to monitor aid effectiveness and plan development. Lack of transparency at the country level limits the extent to which partners can hold each other to account for mutual commitments. On the donor side, providing regular, accurate and timely information on aid activities is an important step to contribute to transparency and mutual accountability.
- 10) Out of complexity, find simplicity. Keeping mutual accountability as practical and simple as possible will make it more inclusive and workable. There is no ‘one size fits all’.

This document has been prepared by the Task Team on Mutual Accountability. The Task Team on Mutual Accountability is part of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness cluster on Ownership and Accountability.