



Discussion Note

Key Development Issues

Context analysis

African actors, both state and non-state, run development programmes at many different levels across the continent. Local and national level development programmes are perhaps the most evident but for several decades now there has been a recognition that regional and continental wide programmes also have a role to play. This view underpins the establishment of the RECs and is also one of the basic tenets of the African Union and NEPAD. Some of the continents development challenges, such as communicable diseases or migration, transcend national boundaries and need to be tackled on regional or continental basis. In other areas such as economic development, improving regional cooperation and building integrated infrastructure systems hold out the promise of more viable regional markets which should better stimulate growth and development. In other areas again, with problems that may need to be tackled on a more national basis, such as education or service provision, there are nevertheless still lessons to be learnt from one nation to the next. Development challenges therefore need to be tackled at all these different levels but in a coordinated and integrated way wherever possible.

The EU as a whole, that is Member States and the Community, are the biggest external supporters of development programmes in Africa. But EU aid is fragmented, unevenly distributed and managed in a multitude of different ways. The EC alone has three different frameworks for development cooperation with different parts of Africa. The EU has committed itself to increasing ODA levels and improving the effectiveness of its aid in line with the precepts of the Paris Declaration on harmonisation and alignment. But there are still question marks over whether it will actually achieve these goals. Improving aid effectiveness also implies improved dialogue with African governments on the best modalities and on how to improve alignment with African driven development programmes.

The Key Development Issues cluster includes a wide variety of topics from infrastructure, through socio-economic issues such as health, education and migration, to debt and financial issues. Some of these have a strongly political dimension as well as a development aspect. Each of them can provide scope for detailed discussions. It is useful therefore to agree on a generic framework for debating each of these subjects.



Key questions

1. *What is the state of the debate on the different topics in the 'key development issues' cluster?*

The first step in such a common framework would be to carry out a stock-taking exercise of what has been achieved in past discussions and identify where the obstacles are to further progress. On this basis further dialogue can then be built.

2. *How to elevate the joint debate on each 'key development issue' to the level of a political dialogue beyond that of a simple discussion of development cooperation?*

Dialogue on development between African European actors has traditionally revolved around questions of how to move forward on cooperation and European support to Africa efforts. The preparation of this joint strategy however offers a unique opportunity to move beyond such a basic level and recognise the value of opening up a genuine political dialogue between Africa and Europe in each of these areas. On some issues, for instance migration, such an AU-EU political dialogue is already engaged, in others, such as environment and climate change, the potential is evident, but further steps could be taken to engage a dialogue on how actors in the two continents could work together to confront such challenges.

3. *How can the current fragmentation of EU support (EC and Member States bilateral programmes) to African development programmes be improved?*

The joint strategy could sketch out an agreed line of action to take towards improving the overall consistency of EU support to development programmes at all levels in Africa. This could cover such issues as the uneven distribution of EU support across the continent and the need to avoid disparities between 'aid orphans' and 'aid darlings'. It could equally discuss the best ways of ensuring consistency between the different EC support programmes to Africa: the Cotonou Agreement, the European Neighbourhood Policy and the TDCA between the EU and South Africa. At another level the joint strategy could spell out an agreed approach on improved integration between the EU support programmes to different levels of development work in Africa from the local and national levels right up to the regional and continental level of NEPAD.

4. *How to strengthen the primary responsibility of Africa in devising and leading on development programmes?*

In order to improve ownership, effectiveness and impact, the joint strategy could clarify how Europe can help African institutions and actors to consolidate further



their leadership on all development programmes. Clarifying points of view and agreeing on the best approaches towards alignment or the use of specific aid modalities such as general budget support could well prove useful. The implications of the principle of increasing African ownership should then be explored in greater detail in each 'key development issue'.

5. How can the effectiveness of EU development cooperation be enhanced and the governance of aid improved?

The Paris Declaration on the effectiveness of aid has been agreed by EU member states and the European Commission as well as a number of African states. This includes important points on the timely, cost effective and transparent administration of development resources. The preparation of this joint strategy provides a good opportunity to consider how these principles can best be put into practice as far as EU cooperation with Africa is concerned and in each area or sector of development.

6. How to ensure the delivery of commitments and the monitoring of progress achieved?

Any healthy partnership recognises the importance of each party reporting on progress made on delivering on their respective commitments. To this end, agreed monitoring and review systems need to be established from the start, so as to ensure information on results is available as and when required and in a form that enables performance assessments to be carried out according to agreed modalities. The preparation of this joint strategy is an ideal opportunity to establish such agreements and ensure all parties are satisfied with the systems set in place.

One key area where Africans will be interested in monitoring progress is in the achievement of donor commitments to increasing ODA levels to meet the 0,7% of GNI target by 2015. The EU has clearly committed itself to this goal in its own Strategy for Africa. A joint Africa-Europe partnership strategy could usefully set out a common understanding of how this goal is to be achieved in practical terms and how performance is to be measured.

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY MANAGEMENT (ECDPM)

Onze Lieve Vrouweplein 21
NL-6211 HE Maastricht
The Netherlands
Tel +31 (0)43 350 29 00,
Fax +31 (0)43 350 29 02

Rue Archimède 5,
B-1000 Brussels
Belgium
Tel +32 (0)2 237 43 10,
Fax +32 (0)2 237 43 19

More information: info@ecdpm.org www.ecdpm.org