

Effective Development Cooperation

GUIDANCE NOTE FOR RESIDENT COORDINATORS AND UNDP RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVES

December 2020



This note is provisional internal guidance to establish a common base of understanding for UN system support to country-led effective development cooperation efforts as well as development partner/donor coordination, recognizing the complementary roles of the Resident Coordinator (RC) and the UNDP Resident Representative (RR).

Noting that country and partnership contexts vary greatly, this note should not be taken as prescriptive. Rather, it suggests entry points and available tools/instruments for strengthening the UN development system (UNDS) role in effective development cooperation, key areas of support and the respective role of RC and the UNDP RR at country level in support of strengthening country – led effective development cooperation mechanisms, including development partners coordination. It will remain a living document, to be updated based on collection and synthesis of additional practical examples. Accordingly, it will be reviewed jointly after one year based on implementation experience.

Effective Development Cooperation Guidance Note

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1. Introduction: Why Does Effective Development Cooperation Matter?



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a frame for the international community to align and consolidate its efforts for sustainable development, with the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda setting a new global framework for financing sustainable development. Recognising the vital role of partnerships in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 17 also calls for the strengthening of the means of implementation and revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development.

Yet, governments and other actors are currently off-track in reaching the SDGs and in mobilising the necessary resources, as set out in the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The COVID-19 global pandemic adds to the challenges for the international community and risks undoing hard-won development gains and undermining the ability to achieve national development plans and the SDGs by 2030. The international community will have to redouble its resolve to work together, using the 2030 Agenda as the shared framework to build back better and get back on track to achieve the SDGs.

In this context, it is more important than ever to *work together effectively* in a more principled way and in a more inclusive and empowered way. Addressing how we work together better based on the internationally agreed effectiveness principles will be a key to the ‘trajectory shift’ that is required.

2. What is Effective Development Cooperation?

Effective development cooperation ensures that all development stakeholders make contributions to development planning and implementation based on their own unique and complementary roles, increasing the impact of all resources on sustainable development outcomes. The [principles of effective development cooperation](#)¹ - **ownership by developing countries, a focus on results, inclusive partnerships, and transparency and accountability** - guide this effort.

¹ The principles of effective development cooperation were adopted in the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (2011). These principles build on aid effectiveness principles. Those partners/governments that endorsed the aid effectiveness principles in Paris and Accra will therefore continue to intensify efforts to implement respective commitments in full (OECD, 2011 [2]).

In this context, aid effectiveness issues, such as alignment, harmonization, coordination, reduction of transaction costs, predictability, untying, and the use of and support to country systems are important areas for development partners to advance. Fragmentation of development assistance is another issue, which remains significant and worsen over the years (Pichon, 2020 [1]).

The effectiveness principles set forth that development can only succeed if led by partner countries, following approaches that are **tailored to country-specific situations and needs**. They call for **development cooperation to be aligned to national development priorities** and for development planning and implementation to be **well coordinated** at country level.

The principles recognize that partnerships built around **openness, trust, mutual respect** are essential in country-level development efforts. They highlight that **accountability among development actors and to the intended beneficiaries of development actions** is essential in delivering results and note that **transparent practices** are the basis for enhanced accountability.



Effective development cooperation focuses on the factors and conditions that help produce sustainable development results and make a sustained difference in the lives of people, and within this, how development cooperation supports these conditions. Particularly, it recognises the centrality of:

- countries' own goals and plans and their own development planning and implementation systems;
- enabling environment and effective public policies to foster engagement of diverse partners and effective utilization of all development resources; and
- conditions for building trust and relationships, based on transparency and accountability.

Additionally, it embraces the diversity of development partners and their unique and complementary roles for achieving development results. Moreover, it reflects the need for a

greater focus on *quality* of cooperation, building on commitments made by governments and development partners on aid and development effectiveness.

In this context, strengthened partnership coordination, that facilitate development partners working effectively with the governments and other stakeholders as well as among them, is an important element of effective development cooperation efforts.

3. How does the UN development system support effective development cooperation at the global level?

At a global level, the UN development system supports various efforts to improve effectiveness of cooperation and partnerships for SDGs. This includes the UN Development Cooperation Forum and its mutual accountability survey, and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and the monitoring of effective development cooperation principles. Further, the High-Level Political Forum as well as the Financing for Sustainable Development process provide an opportunity for dialogue on issues related to international development cooperation.

3.1. The Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation

The [Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation](#) (the Global Partnership) is a **global multi-stakeholder vehicle for driving development effectiveness efforts**, bringing together all types of development actors to advance the effectiveness of development efforts, **accelerating achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs**. Reflecting the spirit of inclusive partnerships and a ‘whole-of-society’ approach that the Partnership promotes, the work of the Global Partnership is led by ministerial/ambassador level co-chairs and driven by a 25-member multi-stakeholder Steering Committee.

Through a multi-pronged work programme, the Global Partnership supports practical implementation of effective development cooperation principles and promotes mutual accountability and political momentum for more effective development cooperation, through the following instruments:

- (1) **A country-focused approach** that helps developing countries make the best use of development cooperation to realise their national development goals with support of regional platforms;
- (2) **Data and evidence generated and shared** on development stakeholders’ progress in meeting their commitments to more effective development cooperation; and

- (3) **Inclusive dialogue** amongst development stakeholders at local, country, regional and global levels. At global level, the Global Partnership's **High-Level Meetings** provide an instrumental platform to uphold accountability and generate new momentum to implement commitments.

UNDP represents the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) as a Steering Committee member in the Global Partnership. Additionally, UNDP works with OECD to support the effective functioning of this Partnership as the OECD-UNDP Joint Support Team.

The Global Partnership monitoring framework is a flagship instrument of the Global Partnership and a source of data for SDG 17 indicators on multi-stakeholder development effectiveness

As part of the substantive support to the Global Partnership, UNDP together with OECD supports the monitoring of effective development cooperation. The Global Partnership monitoring is a multi-stakeholder, voluntary, and country-level process that tracks progress towards implementing the effectiveness principles. It seeks to capture behaviour change by focusing on how partners work together, and supports global accountability for implementing effective development cooperation commitments. The Global Partnership monitoring exercise generates unique evidence, through a multi-stakeholder process. The monitoring framework consists of a set of ten indicators that focus on strengthening developing countries' institutions, increasing the transparency and predictability of development cooperation, enhancing gender equality, and supporting greater involvement of civil society, parliaments, and the private sector in development efforts.

Data and evidence generated from countries through the monitoring are used to inform progress on the following SDG indicators.

- SDG indicator 5.c.1 on the existence of systems to track public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment;
- SDG indicator 17.15.1, on the use of country-owned results frameworks and planning tools, and
- SDG indicator 17.16.1, on progress made by countries in multi-stakeholder monitoring of development effectiveness.

Given the role of UNDP with OECD for the Global Partnership Monitoring Framework, UNDP together with OECD are joint custodian agencies for the two of the SDG 17 Indicators (SDG Indicator 17.15.1 and 17.16.1), and works closely with UN Women for SDG Indicator 5.c.1.

In 2018, a record 86 partner-country governments took part in the Global Partnership's 2018 effectiveness monitoring exercise. They were joined by more than 100 development partners and hundreds of civil society organisations, private sector representatives, foundations, trade unions, parliamentarians and local governments. These countries believe that the effectiveness principles are a critical multiplier for their development efforts; a basis for more equal and empowered partnerships, for more sustainable development outcomes.

In 2020-2022, the monitoring framework will be strengthened in order to ensure the monitoring process continues to deliver on its promise of driving behavioral changes and promoting accountability, while meeting the evolving needs of its stakeholders and producing evidence relevant to the effectiveness challenges of today.

The UN Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) and UNDP Country Offices (COs) in many countries have played an important role in supporting country-led monitoring of effective development cooperation. The specific support provided by UNRCOs and UNDP COs depends on the request from governments as well as in-country resource and expertise. UNDP in its capacity as the OECD/UNDP Joint Support Team (and as a joint custodian agency for SDG 17 indicators) provides helpdesk functions, quality assurance and technical guidance as requested by the UNRCOs and UNDP COs.

The Global Partnership in the ‘Decade of Action’ and the role of the UN development system at country level

The unique crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic will have devastating impacts on development gains, while undermining continuing progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The impacts of the pandemic are multi-faceted, requiring multisectoral and a whole-of-society response. Moreover, the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic will be profound, which has significant implication of future of financing for sustainable development and development cooperation. With resources remaining constrained, the **quality and impact of partnerships** are essential elements that can make the difference.

In this context, the Global Partnership through its [2020-2022 Work Programme](#) aims to facilitate building effective development partnerships that help accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Leave No One Behind. Three strategic priorities guide the Partnership’s contribution to begin the “Decade of Action” and see the Partnership to its next High-Level Meeting on effectiveness scheduled for 2022.

1. Development effectiveness for accelerating progress to 2030
2. Building better partnerships
3. Leveraging monitoring for action

Any efforts by partners to improve the quality and impact of development cooperation and partnerships need to be guided by and informed of realities, opportunities and challenges at country level. Thus, the successful deliberation of the Global Partnership’s work rests on creating a virtuous circle for more effective and impactful partnerships for SDG implementation at country level, building on on-going effort to strengthen SDG coordination and partnership mechanisms.

In this vein, the current efforts to strengthen the Global Partnership monitoring provide an opportunity to foster multi-stakeholder dialogue on how new evidence and data on effective development cooperation can incentivise policy and behavioral changes and strengthen effective development cooperation mechanisms, fit for the 2030 Agenda.

3.2. UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) and National Mutual Accountability Survey

The Development Cooperation Forum reviews the latest trends and progress in international development cooperation and encourages coordination across diverse actors and activities. The DCF brings together ministers and senior experts from developing and developed countries, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, international organizations and development banks, local governments, philanthropic foundations and private sector at biennial High-Level Forum. UNDESA provides secretariat support to the DCF.

UNDESA undertakes a biennial survey for the DCF on progress in national mutual accountability and transparency. The DCF Survey serves to monitor, review and document the evidence on the state of play in effectiveness of development cooperation on the ground in the responding countries. Participating countries structure their assessment around five key enablers of effective development cooperation:

- National development cooperation policies (NDCPs)
- Country-driven results frameworks (CRFs)
- National development cooperation forums (NDCF)
- Development cooperation information systems (DCIS)
- Capacity support.

The results of the survey inform policy recommendations on mutual accountability and transparency. The DCF Survey is rolled out through the Member State missions to the UN. The UN Resident Coordinator Offices received the information from UNDESA through the Development Coordination Office relating to the DCF survey.

4. How can the UN development system support effective development cooperation at country level?

The UN development system's support to global forum and coalitions for improving effective development cooperation draws on country leadership and government-led effective development cooperation efforts. At the country level, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, the UN development system (UNDS) plays a significant role in forging *effective* development cooperation and partnerships, as well as facilitating a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach for the SDGs. At the same time, the specific support provided by the UNDS in this area varies from country to country, and the role of UNDS in partnership coordination is not always given as a default arrangement for many countries. Other partners such as the World Bank and EU delegation also provide various kinds of support in this area, including leading partnership coordination and dialogue.

In addressing a multiplicity of complex challenges, including the significant socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 global crisis, the UNDS at country level should play a strategic role in ensuring that efforts of all partners and cooperation make a sustained difference in the lives of people and build resilience, drawing on its role as a convener, a facilitator, and an advocate for SDGs and international norms and standards. This requires strong political and strategic leadership of the Resident Coordinator, consistent with the critical role of the UN Resident Coordinator system in raising ambition and mobilizing all actors to accelerate action and achieve the SDGs.

The operational platform and advisory services of UNDP provides a critical bedrock for the strengthened UN Resident Coordinator system and the UN Country Teams (UN, 2017 ^[3])² in its interface with government-owned SDG coordination mechanisms. In line with the Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System (UNSDG, 2019 ^[4]) and through its integrator role and work on institutional and capacity strengthening³, UNDP can support the Resident Coordinator and the UNCT to promote aligned and coordinated support of development partners and support national governments with strengthening their development coordination mechanisms for pursuing a whole of government and a whole of society approach.

There are various entry points that can be considered in discussion with governments and development partners to define and position the role of the UN in effective development cooperation and partnership coordination. These include but not limited to:

- UN's support to intra-governmental and multi-sectoral SDG coordination and implementation mechanisms to support horizontal coordination across ministries / sectors as well as vertical coordination across government levels. Many of these coordination mechanisms are making distinct efforts to be inclusive of all types of development partners. Anchoring effectiveness dialogue and mutual accountability frameworks within these coordination mechanisms, which are typically led by a key central ministry, such as Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Finance, or Ministry of Planning, can facilitate strengthening multi-stakeholder efforts for improving effectiveness, quality and impact of cooperation and partnerships for SDGs.
- The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework provides the basis to engage in dialogue with host governments to further explore a strengthened role and support of the UN development system at country level in effective development cooperation. The Cooperation Framework itself embodies the effectiveness principles, by serving as a nationally owned accountability tool between the UNCT and the host Government, use of the SDGs as a shared framework for development results, and engagement with a broad

² The UN Secretary General highlighted that *'the operational platform and advisory services of UNDP will serve as a bedrock for the UNCTs and the new resident coordinator system'* (A/72/684-E/2018/7, Para 71)

³ The Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System noted the important role of UNDP in its integrator role to support the RC to provide UNCTs with support for more integrated policy advice and whole of government approaches to the SDGs.

range of stakeholders at country level, including bilateral and multilateral partners, parliaments, local governments, civil society, trade unions, academia and the private sector. This provides several openings for further discussion on and strengthening of effective development cooperation.

- UN's support to Voluntary National Reviews provides a useful occasion to reflect upon opportunities and challenges for stronger development partnerships and to explore effective coordination mechanisms that engage not only partners that finance development but also support development with innovation, technology and knowledge.
- UN's support to Integrated National Financing Frameworks can provide an occasion to reflect on ways to better align development cooperation with country priorities and coordinate policy asks of the international community on financing issues.

The Global Partnership and its monitoring framework as well as the DCF mutual accountability survey can be used as instruments to help strengthen the role of the UN Resident Coordinator system and UN Country Teams in leading partnership coordination.

4.1. Positioning and Strengthening the Role of the UN in Effective Development Cooperation Architecture at Country-level

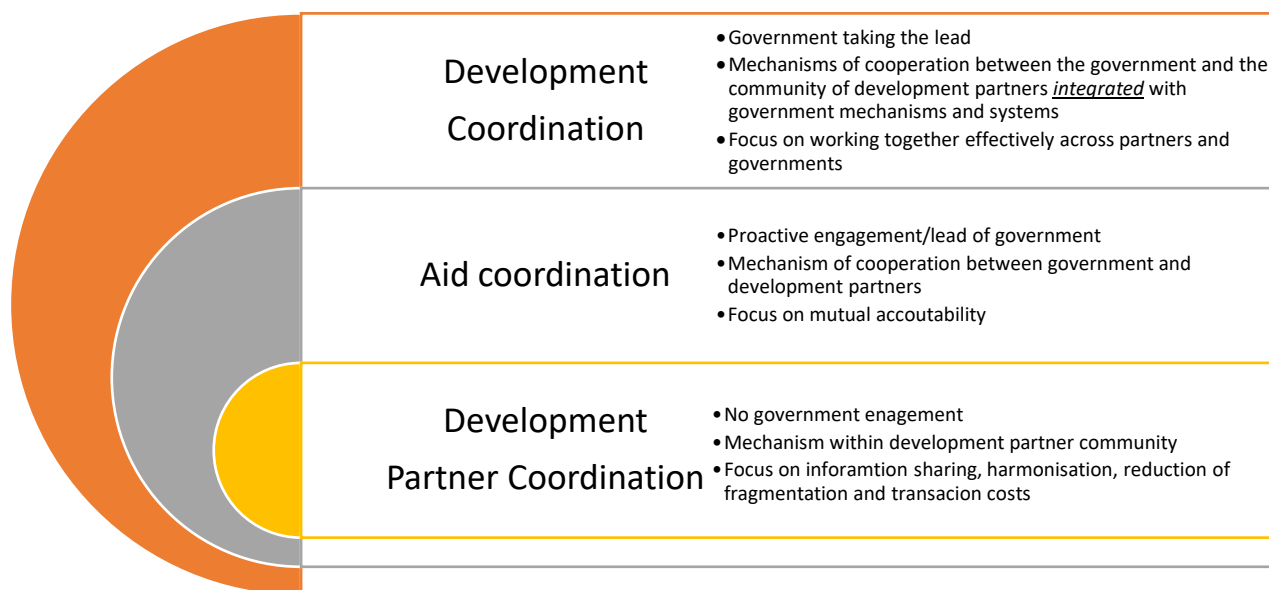
Effective development cooperation requires strengthened coordination of development planning, financing, implementation and monitoring, and alignment with national development priorities. Robust, well-functioning effective development cooperation architecture plays an important role to align development cooperation to national goals and priorities and improve how partners work together with government and among them.

Effective development cooperation architecture in many countries consists of three types of coordination mechanisms:

1. a government-led **development coordination mechanism**, which focuses on policy and institutional strengthening, improving enabling environment for inclusive partnerships and refining inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue and accountability mechanisms;
2. an **aid/development cooperation coordination mechanism**, which focuses on working together effectively between government and development partners and mutual accountability; and
3. a **development partner coordination mechanism**, which focuses on development partners working effectively among them.

These mechanisms are not mutually exclusive, and in some cases, there could be a hybrid form in use in country [figure 1].

Figure 1: Effective Development Cooperation Architecture⁴



While the government-led development coordination mechanism is the critical backbone for effective development cooperation efforts at country level, mechanisms that aim to improve development partners working effectively with governments and working among them are important in order to improve coordination, alignment and engagement of development partners in national development planning, financing/budgeting, implementation and monitoring processes.

It is also vital to note that development partner coordination alone will not achieve significant improvement in effectiveness and efficiency of development assistance nor achieve significant development results, unless they are effectively integrated within national development planning and governance structures and systems.

In this vein, national capacities for development planning, financing, budgeting, aid/development cooperation management, as well as monitoring and review are the critical enabler for effective development cooperation architecture. **This is in line with the GA resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, which recognises the primary responsibility of national governments for coordination of external assistance and underscores the importance of the UNDS to strengthen national capacities and support partner countries to leverage partnerships with diverse stakeholders. It further recognises the important role of the Resident Coordinator system in improving the effectiveness of UN operational activities**

⁴ Drawn from the review of coordination mechanisms for development cooperation in Serbia (2011 [6]) and Tajikistan [WHO, 2009 [7]], updated by the author of this note

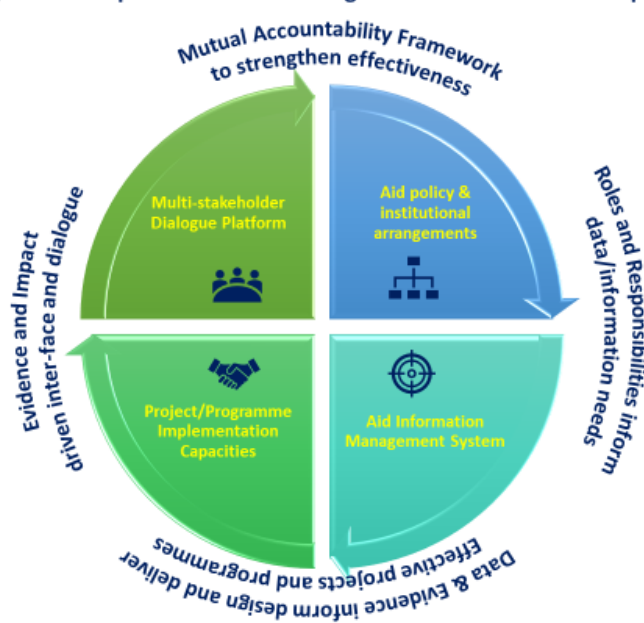
for development at the country level through the promotion of strategic support to national development plans and priorities. (UN, 2020 and 2016 [7])⁵.

Moreover, the efforts within the community of development partners to coordinate amongst themselves should not undermine or overtake the core government's function of development coordination.

The UN Resident Coordinator has a unique and strategic role in ensuring that development partner coordination mechanisms support rather than undermine government-led mechanisms of effective development cooperation. The strategic role of the UN Resident Coordinator can be further strengthened through UN development system capacity strengthening support at national, sectoral and sub-national level, and complemented by UNCT members leading respective thematic/sectoral coordination and dialogue fora.

Additionally, UNDP's experience and expertise in supporting national capacities and systems for aid management and coordination (Figure 2), can provide a solid basis for the Resident Coordinator to lead strategic positioning of UN's role in, as well as relevant, effective and efficient support to effective partnerships for national, regional and global sustainable development agenda. To date, UNDP offices have supported effective development cooperation in various ways in over 60 programme countries, where relevant and through its country programmes and beyond (UNDP, 2016 [8], 2017 [9], 2018 [10], 2019 [11]). UNDP also supports new and emerging donor countries ((e.g. Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Russian Federation, etc.) in establishing their development cooperation systems and in enhancing their Official Development Assistance (ODA) management capacities and impact.

Figure 2: Components of Aid Management & Coordination Support



This includes the following interrelated components of aid management and coordination systems:

1. **National aid/development cooperation policy and institutional arrangements and capacities**, which aim to strengthen ownership, capacity development and impact, through institutional and strategic frameworks for aid management and coordination. Crucially, an aid policy (or a new ODA legal framework in the case of emerging donors)

⁵ See paragraphs 22, 34 and 97 of the 2020 QCPR resolution (A/C.2/75/L.61) and paragraph 4 of the 2016 QCPR (A/RES/71/243).

can be used as a starting point for assessing institutional capacity needs, which are required to perform the assigned institutional roles, develop results-based management mechanisms and deliver expected results.

2. **Aid / Development Finance Information Management System / ODA Reporting systems**, which ensure access to high-quality and timely information on development cooperation; helping governments to plan and manage development cooperation for development results.
3. **Design and Implementation Capacity Support**, such as establishment and management of a large variety of ODA implementation mechanisms ranging from trust funds, challenge funds. This type of support also includes sharing knowledge on mechanisms and ODA expert mobility schemes.
4. **Effective multi-stakeholder dialogue mechanisms**, through technical support for mutual accountability and review of progress on effective development cooperation.

Hence, UNDP has a critical lead role to play in providing technical support in strengthening national capacities for aid management and coordination system on behalf of UN development system for enhanced effective development cooperation mechanisms.

References

- 1) Pichon, Eric, *Briefing: Understanding development effectiveness: concepts, players and tools*, European Parliamentary Research Service, European Union, 2020
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- 3) UN, *Report of the Secretary-General, Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: Our propose for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet*, A/72/684-E/2018/7, 2017
- 4) UN Sustainable Development Group, *Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System*, 2019
- 5) *Setting up a More Effective Aid Coordination Mechanism in Serbia*, 2011.
- 6) WHO Regional Office for Europe, *Review of coordination mechanisms for development cooperation in Tajikistan*, 2009.
- 7) UN, *Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system*, A/RES/71/243, 2016 and A/C.2/75/L.18, 2020, which is yet to be formally adopted.
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- 9) UNDP, *2016 Annual Project Status Report of the Global Project for Managing Development Cooperation Effective*, 2017.
- 10) UNDP, *2017 Annual Project Status Report of the Global Project for Managing Development Cooperation Effective*, 2018.
- 11) UNDP, *2018 Annual Project Status Report of the Global Project for Managing Development Cooperation Effective*, 2019.