

## Who owns the EDF? Political realities and domestic accountability in EU development aid

### *Report*

The panel discussion took place on 25 January 2017 from 13.30 to 17.30 at the Martin's Brussels EU. A total of 65 participants, including civil society representatives, local and international development practitioners, consultants, researchers and EU officials attended the event.

**Ken Godfrey**, Executive Director at the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), welcomed all participants and thanked the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and the Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA) for their support in the preparation of the event. He introduced the topic of the discussion by highlighting the importance of domestic accountability for achieving sustainable development and increasing aid effectiveness.

#### Panel I: Ownership and the EDF – How to tackle politics in development?

The first panel, moderated by **Anna Knoll**, Head of Programme – Migration at the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), featured different perspectives of understanding ownership in the context of the European Development Fund (EDF) and explored how development policies in the ACP region can tackle the highly complex issue of politics. Specific attention was paid to the particularities that the EDF has as a funding instrument and what this has meant for the inclusion of a wider range of perspectives (in both ACP countries and the EU).

**Domenico Rosa**, Head of Unit D3 ACP Coordination at DG DEVCO, outlined efforts that were taken to tailor multi-annual programming under the EDF to the national development strategies in recipient countries. This has entailed the larger inclusion of local non-state actors (specifically civil society organisations) since the Cotonou Agreement. On the European side, channels for public scrutiny by the European Parliament have been expanded. Mr Rosa underlined that although the engagement of non-state actors has been a clear objective under the EDF, the main actors remain governments, also by legal requirement of the Cotonou Agreement.

**Fabien Nsengimana**, Executive Director of the Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP), spoke about the case of Burundi, where the volatile political situation makes it difficult for international donors to grant aid effectively. As a remedy to this situation, Mr Nsengimana suggested several strategies to the EU: to conduct political economy analysis before deciding to grant aid; to adapt aid more clearly to the political context of the country; and to strengthen the capacities of non-state actors. His main argument was that it is of utmost importance to reach out to all development stakeholders, without casting aside non-state actors.

**Judith Sargentini**, Member of the European Parliament (EP) for the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, argued that leverage over the EDF still resides very much with the EU – more precisely the Council of the EU. She lamented the fact that the EP's level of scrutiny, access to information

and influence on decisions is not very high. Ms Sargentini also pointed out that it is not possible for development cooperation to remain completely neutral because EU Member States are often concerned with geopolitics, especially migration. She added that the current trend of diverting funds to migration management is likely to be detrimental to eradicating poverty in ACP countries in the long run.

**Kizito Tenthani**, Executive Director Uganda at the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), recommended an increased consideration of politics in development. Initiatives in the health, education, and energy sectors cannot be understood as neutral. Developing the capacity of civil society and media actors in the context of development cooperation would allow for better design and monitoring of aid. Development actors need to analyse and understand the political situation and take power dynamics into account in recipient countries.

The input of all panellists was followed by a Q&A with the audience.

#### Panel II: Domestic accountability actors across the EDF programming cycle

The second panel, moderated by **Ken Godfrey**, looked more specifically at the ways in which actors other than the executive arm of government could be involved in the implementation of the EDF. It was also a chance for EPD to present key findings of its [recent input paper](#), which looks at the extent that domestic accountability is addressed under the EDF and gives specific recommendations, designed to be practical steps for improving domestic accountability, ownership and aid effectiveness in ACP countries.

**Isaac Maposa**, Executive Director of the Zimbabwe Institute (ZI), identified insufficient support to political parties and civil society as the biggest weakness of the EDF. In Zimbabwe, the political structures are rather weak and civil society organisations lack coordination and sustainable funding opportunities. As a consequence, non-state actors are not able to hold the government accountable, especially with regard to the implementation of the EDF. Support should not be given on an ad hoc basis following a “one-size-fits-all” approach: instead, it should always come with a long-term perspective.

**Karine Sohet**, Senior Policy Officer on EU Development Policy and Practice at ACT Alliance EU, presented a survey conducted by CONCORD on the EU’s involvement with civil society organisations. While the survey identifies an overall positive trend, the dialogue between EU delegations and civil society should be more structured and more long-term. EU delegations also need to strengthen their communication with civil society organisations, which are often unaware on the EU’s approach to development in the respective country. She added that there is a need for capacity building of civil society organisations to strengthen their ability to effectively take part in development.

**Andreia Oliveira**, EU Advocacy Officer at Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW), presented a long-term analysis of the EDF since the signing of the Cotonou Agreement. At the outset of her remarks, she thanked EPD for organising such a timely event, coming as it is during a key moment for the mid-term review of the EDF. Since 2000 and the realisation that civil society should be more involved in development, the EDF has increased the amount of funding to civil society. However, funds earmarked to that purpose do not always reach civil society in an effective manner. Moreover,

civil society is often not properly taken into account in the programming of aid. The EDF still seems to suffer from a lack of consultation before implementation and follow-up after implementation.

**Hermenegildo Mulhovo**, Executive Director Mozambique at the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), addressed the subject of budget support in development cooperation. Budget support is often perceived as a means to increase cohesion between different international donors and to prompt better financial management and accountability on the side of the recipient governments. However, this was not the case in Mozambique, where the government managed to escape the oversight of national stakeholders, civil society and parliament, as well as international donors. To prevent such situations, the EU should increase support to the political party spectrum in order to strengthen the oversight capacities of the national parliament and ensure overall accountability of aid.

The input of all panellists was followed by a Q&A with the audience.

The moderator concluded by summarising the salient points of the panel discussion, highlighting specifically the need to increase the in-country awareness of EU funding instruments, to broaden the range of actors with which the EU engages, and to follow long-term approaches rather than ad-hoc support to domestic accountability actors.