Foreword

Support for better governance and accountability has been a growing component of development co-operation in recent decades. The ways in which people hold their governments to account has been acknowledged and embedded in strong commitments agreed in the Paris Principles and the Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation. There is growing recognition, too, that strengthening accountability is critical if we are to make women's rights and gender equality a reality. Research suggests that a lack of accountability can be more of an obstacle to progress in this area than, for instance, a lack of resources.

While this strengthened focus on supporting accountability is welcome, a new approach is needed. Donors have tended to replicate Western models, rather than going "with the grain" and tailoring their support to partner country settings. Development co-operation is inherently political. Outsiders cannot impose a one-size-fits-all global recipe for success in development. Only the people of a country can be the source of authority and legitimacy. What development co-operation can and should do is insist that governments help citizens participate in the development process, that fundamental rights be preserved, and that accountability mechanisms be in place through healthy institutions so that governments answer to the people and their representatives.

The merit of this study conducted by the DAC Network on Governance is its exploration of innovative ways to improve support to accountability in developing countries – while "doing no harm" and avoiding undermining inherently political processes. This study highlights the need for a more holistic, comprehensive approach to accountability support and more deference to partners as they evolve their systems, while external actors play the part of facilitators. It proposes a systems approach where all accountability actors take part in the country's own development script. Findings were based on analysis of accountability functions in processes such as service delivery in sectors and in public financial management. The report is grounded in evidence from in-depth case studies in Mali, Mozambique, Peru and Uganda. It also benefits from consultations with leading experts in the field. The result is an important set of findings for

policy makers and programme managers, donors and partners from developing country accountability institutions who work every day to strengthen democratic governance.

Erik Solheim
Chair
OECD Development Assistance Committee

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The OECD-DAC Governance Network (GOVNET) ran a collaborative programme on development co-operation and accountability with a range of leading donors, partner countries and experts on accountability. The aim was to take stock of experience, survey emerging trends, assess leading thinking and literature, and identify promising leads on how to better support accountability in developing countries – and to help avoid undermining or skewing local processes.

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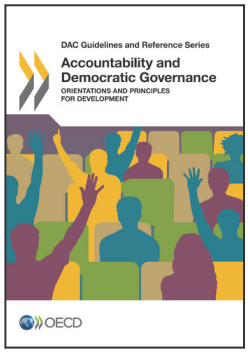

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