PEOPLE AND SKILLS

DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION **FUNDAMENTALS**

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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Development co-operation is only as good as the people that underpin it.

Building people and teams that are flexible, innovative, mobile, diverse and efficient helps Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members to fully understand context, formulate appropriate policies, build effective partnerships and ensure optimal use of limited resources.

DAC members undertake strategic workforce planning and put in place systems and resources to build, borrow or buy the people and skills they need.

A diverse, flexible and performing workforce allows members to analyse context, formulate and influence policies, build relationships and continually improve internal systems.

Members have the expertise, knowledge and capacity to develop coherent policies, co-ordinate with others and form effective partnerships.

Members' policies, processes and partnerships allow them to deliver their policy objectives and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

BASIC STANDARDS

Most DAC members have standard civil service codes, charters and ethics statements to guide their people management. The OECD has also identified three building blocks for an effective public service:

A **values-driven** culture and leadership	**Skilled** and **effective** public servants	**Responsive** and **adaptive** public employment systems

With specific regard to development co-operation, **the DAC expects that members have a diverse, skilled** and **knowledgeable workforce**. The number or profile of staff, how performance is managed, and the extent of decentralisation or delegated authority depends on each member's policy objectives, institutional structure, ways of working and scale.

Section B.2 of the OECD DAC Peer Review Analytical Framework on human resources capabilities and skills identifies the need for members to have the necessary diversity, skills, capacity for critical thinking, and knowledge at all levels to manage and deliver development co-operation efforts effectively, and ensure the right skills are in the right places.

GOOD PRACTICES

Plan strategically to ensure capacity is in place to deliver policy objectives

- **Management dashboards**: Many members, including the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, use management dashboards to track and anticipate staff numbers, skills and performance.

- **A long-term perspective to recruitment:** France's Development Agency (AFD) anticipated expansion of its workforce five years in advance. This has allowed time to ensure skills were in place and to negotiate new contracts.

- **Institutional reviews:** Belgium and the Czech Republic periodically review their institutional arrangements, e.g. the division of labour between the ministry responsible for development and its related agency. This minimises the duplication of technical skills and increases efficiency.

GOOD PRACTICES

Build skills and capacities through continuous learning

- **Staff rotation:** Smaller administrations, such as Denmark, the Slovak Republic and Ireland, ensure a regular rotation of staff between headquarters and overseas posts and between policy, programming and support functions. Good workforce planning is needed to manage turnover, ensure adequate attention to induction, handover and knowledge management.

- **Helpdesks:** Technical helpdesks offer guidance and advice to teams across government on diverse issues such as disability, innovation, adaptation or evaluation.

GOOD PRACTICES

Buy or borrow additional skills to make best use of core staff

- **Knowledge transfer:** DAC members are increasingly crowding in expertise and skills from across their own ministries and institutions. Examples include Norway's Knowledge Bank and Expertise France.

- **Outsourcing:** The United Kingdom uses third-party monitoring in fragile states and a private contractor to provide humanitarian experts when needed. Learning objectives and structured feedback ensure that evidence and knowledge are retained in-house. Outsourcing procurement, recruitment, training, security and IT support can also free up staff for other tasks.

- **Regional hubs:** Where resources are scarce or where members find it challenging to staff fragile contexts, posting staff to regional offices – for example to Nairobi to cover the Horn of Africa – is a strategy used by France, Italy, Luxembourg and Spain.

GOOD PRACTICES

Engage staff in shaping policies; monitor well-being

- **Shaping policies:** The Netherlands engaged all teams in their Fewer, Bigger, More Flexible reform. This built ownership of critical decisions and led to a 25% reduction in the number of partnerships.

- **Ethics and well-being:** The United States conducts regular staff surveys and facilitates staff representation in decision making, including for Foreign Service Nationals. All staff receive training on ethics and codes of conduct, including on topics such as sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

Support team building by encouraging an agile and motivated workforce

- **Knowledge sharing:** The United Kingdom's advisory cadres enable a flow of information, collaboration and innovation across programmes and countries. Individual performance assessment includes a requirement to contribute 10% of time to other teams.

GOOD PRACTICES

Invest in country presence, particularly in fragile contexts

- **Local staff in key roles**: Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States have created senior roles for locally-engaged staff. This provides institutional memory, builds relationships and networks, and contributes to better understanding country priorities and needs.

- **Review local capacity**: The United Kingdom regularly reviews which skill gaps can be filled by locally-engaged staff or regional recruits and allows staff to move between country offices. This has helped to attract staff to fragile contexts.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Indicators to assess if DAC members are moving in the right direction:

► The member **regularly reviews plans** to build and maintain adequate expertise and capacity, encouraging staff development.

► Staff **diversity** is reflected at all levels, and a **performance system** is in place that encourages collaboration and critical thinking.

► Appropriate **responsibility and resources are devolved** to country offices, supported by adequate staffing, particularly in fragile or crisis contexts.

► Human resource management systems include **a code of conduct and ethical standards** with proactive measures to engage staff and promote wellbeing.

RESOURCES

This briefing note breaks down the 2020 OECD Council Recommendation on Public Service Leadership and Capability. The OECD public governance site also includes tools and guidance for institutional structures, and look out for an upcoming paper on Civil Service Capacities in the SDG Era.

The OECD developed resources for implementing the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment, including steps adherents should take in relation to their staff.

A World Bank 'Bureaucracy Lab' blog explores factors that drive civil servant motivation and performance.

This OECD Insight Brief expands on some of the points included above.

Find relevant evaluations via the DAC Evaluation Resource Centre (DEReC).

Relevant topics in this series

Risk management plays a role in setting incentives for staff to innovate and exercise their authority.

Fragility draws out specific considerations for the capabilities needed to engage in fragile contexts [*forthcoming*].
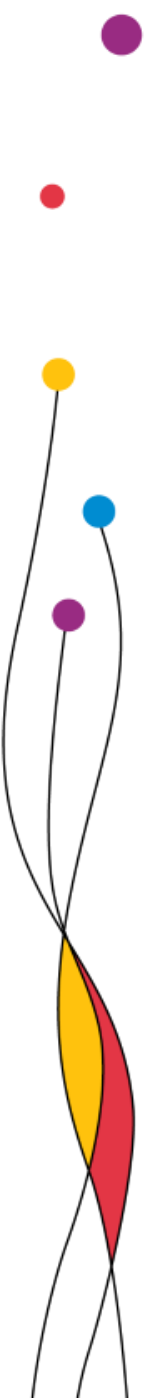
DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION
FUNDAMENTALS

This series unpacks development co-operation standards and illustrates how DAC members are applying them. Applying standards can help all actors to fulfil their ambitions and commitments.

Each *Fundamentals* document introduces a *key aspect* of effective co-operation, sets out *basic standards*, offers *good practice* examples, and identifies *relevant resources.*

Other topics in this series, which is being expanded and updated regularly, can be found **here**. For any comments contact **DCD.TIPs@oecd.org**.

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