

Short Project Description:

Building capacity for monitoring decentralisation and local governance processes

Since the mid 1980s, many ACP states have launched a new generation of democratic decentralisation programmes aiming to promote new institutions and frameworks for local governance. These reform processes have attracted a considerable amount of external support from the international community.

The Cotonou Agreement recognises these reform efforts and makes cooperation in the field of decentralisation and municipal development a new priority of ACP-EU relations. In line with the evolving institutional landscape of the ACP, the Agreement also opens cooperation to a wide variety of actors, including sub-national government and local organisations.

Monitoring and evaluation of cooperation in this field constitutes an important operational challenge for the different actors involved in promoting and implementing decentralisation. Moreover, in the context of the Cotonou Agreement's emphasis on performance-oriented participatory monitoring and review processes, questions arise about how to consult and involve actors from sub-national levels in assessing the effects and impacts of cooperation.

Objective and thematic focus

This activity explores approaches and options for monitoring and evaluating support to decentralisation and local governance. It aims to stimulate more systematic reflection, access to information, capitalisation of experiences and dialogue among stakeholders with a view to identify best practices and provide guidance for future cooperation.

A particular focus is on analysis and dialogue on new participatory approaches to M&E that:

- involve a range of stakeholders in assessing effects and impacts of support,
- contribute to strengthening local M&E and accountability systems, and
- provide insights on how to operationalise the new provisions on joint assessment and review of cooperation stipulated by the Cotonou Agreement.

Research questions

Research and consultation with stakeholders focuses on the following questions:

- How is support to democratic decentralisation and local governance monitored and evaluated?
- What operational challenges and difficulties are faced in M&E with regard to effects and impacts of interventions?
- What are some experiences with participatory and multi-stakeholder approaches to M&E?
- What constitutes best practice in this field?
- How can capacity be best built for monitoring and evaluating, decentralisation and strengthening local accountability systems?
- How can the Cotonou Agreement's new provisions on M&E of cooperation and multi-stakeholder review processes be operationalised in decentralisation and local governance?

Methodology and approach

Analysis and findings draw on the following research and dialogue components:

- literature research and desk studies
- consultations with experts and actors on M&E research methodology and support to decentralisation and local governance
- country case studies (field research) in three ACP countries, each focusing on a country-specific issue in M&E that is of broader relevance. The following countries and themes have been studied:
 - Burkina Faso: monitoring and evaluation of capacity building, training and civic education programmes on decentralisation
 - Kenya: monitoring and evaluating the diverse practices of decentralisation
- restitution to and discussion of research findings with stakeholders at the country level and in a final expert seminar
- joint identification of lessons learned, best practice and a menu of options for future cooperation
- dissemination of findings and recommendation with a view to stimulate a broader debate