

Michael Strautmann



# Interorganisational Coordination in Development Cooperation

How Communication at the Country Level Transforms  
Fragmentation into Coherence and Complementarity



Nomos

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## Abstract

International development cooperation (DC) is provided by many different bi- and multilateral organizations through a multiplicity of different channels. This fragmentation of non-concerted and overlapping activities undermines the overall efficiency and effectiveness of DC, e.g. in the fight against extreme poverty. Therefore, the international community has committed itself to work towards higher aid effectiveness. This commitment is reflected in a series of international agreements – most prominently in the widely acknowledged Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. In these agreements, donors committed to harmonize their DC activities by engaging in joint activities and programmes. Over a decade later, respective progress is ambiguous at best. This study set out to better understand why the commitments to more interorganizational cooperation have not yielded results. Previous studies indicated that the success of coordination and cooperation between development organizations (DOs) depends on donors' national interests and informal processes. However, none of the previous studies are based on a rigorous theoretical framework that enables understanding of how the different levels of DC relate to and depend on each other. Even more critical: hardly any of the previous research collected data in partner countries, albeit numerous studies noted that this is essential to understand the failure and success of coordination and cooperation between DOs. Responding to these insufficiencies of existing research, a) an elaborated theoretical concept was developed using Luhmann's systems theory, and b) research was conducted in partner countries. Four case studies were carried out between October 2015 and May 2016. In both, Indonesia and Madagascar, data was collected in the environment and education sectors to analyze how cooperation between DOs works on the operative level, i.e. how relationships between DOs scale up from the individual to the organizational level. The field research revealed that donor countries and DOs have not translated their commitments on improved coordination and cooperation into practice. Accordingly, this study found that operational support for the comprehensive alignment and harmonization of activities has ceased – and that donor countries' national political and economic interests are increasingly dominating DC. It also revealed, however, that DO employees at partner country level mitigate the lack of organizational commitment, by re-connecting local activities to partner countries' needs –

*Abstract*

and thus to the global altruistic narrative of transnational solidarity. In quasi-formal meetings at the (sub)sectoral level, representatives of DOs coordinate to reduce overlap and to increase aid effectiveness, thereby arranging for the complementarity of their activities – the most efficient and effective form of cooperation possible. This pragmatic *modus operandi* aims at the thematic and/or geographic complementarity of DC activities and substantially contributes to overall efficiency and effectiveness. In addition, this study also identified the preconditions for more intensive forms of interorganizational cooperation. Accordingly, it concludes with a call for a decentralized and context-sensitive approach to interorganizational cooperation.

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## List of Acronyms

<b>ABD</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>AFD</b>	Agence Française de Développement
<b>BMZ</b>	German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>BS</b>	general budget support
<b>BRICS</b>	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
<b>CIDA</b>	Canadian International Development Agency
<b>CPA</b>	country programmable aid
<b>CPH</b>	causal process hypothesis
<b>CPC</b>	causal process chain
<b>CSO</b>	civil society organization
<b>DC</b>	development cooperation
<b>DO</b>	development organization
<b>EADI</b>	European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes
<b>EP</b>	European Parliament
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development (UK)
<b>GAVI</b>	Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunization
<b>GDI</b>	German Development Institute
<b>GIZ</b>	German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation
<b>GIGA</b>	German Institute of Global and Area Studies
<b>GPEDC</b>	Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>IPCC</b>	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>IAD</b>	Institutional Analysis and Development framework
<b>ICI</b>	Interorganizational Cooperation Index
<b>IGGI</b>	Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia
<b>IT</b>	information technology
<b>IO</b>	international organization
<b>IORA</b>	Indian Ocean Rim Association
<b>JICA</b>	Japan International Cooperation Agency
<b>LDC</b>	least developed country

*List of Acronyms*

<b>MDCD</b>	most different cases design
<b>NAM</b>	Non-Aligned Movement
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>NIE</b>	new institutional economics
<b>PC</b>	partner country
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>ODF</b>	official development finance
<b>OOF</b>	other official flows
<b>ODA</b>	official development assistance
<b>PBA</b>	programme-based approach
<b>PD</b>	Paris Declaration
<b>QA</b>	qualitative content analysis
<b>QNA</b>	qualitative network analysis
<b>RBA</b>	result-based aid
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SIDA</b>	Swedish International Development Agency
<b>SWAp</b>	sector-wide approach
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>USD</b>	United States Dollar
<b>WWF</b>	World Wide Fund for Nature