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AT FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE, THE OUTLINES OF A PLAN TO FUND THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

A high-level meeting of global stakeholders took place 13-16 July in Addis Ababa to develop a strategy to finance the post-2015 sustainable development goals, against a backdrop of donor fatigue, the enduring global financial crisis and a growing insistence on improved domestic financing for development issues.

Draft outcome documents already under development suggest that the broad lines of a roadmap to finance the sustainable development goals are in place: the fine print, however, including the estimated size of the envelope needed to make a meaningful impact, has yet to be written.

“The Addis Ababa Accord will be evidence of our ambition for the future and our commitment to justice and equality,” said Hannah Bowen, director of ACTION, in a statement prepared for the opening of the conference ending 16 July. “Life has improved for many over the last 15 years, but decision makers must come to FFD ready to say how we all – civil society, businesses, governments – will finance continued progress that reaches the poorest and most vulnerable people in our world.”

Funding strategies under discussion at the conference are taking a multi-pronged approach to resource mobilization, drawing on public and private funds, both international and domestic, in an attempt to provide a much-needed boost to the development agenda, which has seen investments flatline in recent years, particularly in the countries that need them the most.

Figures released ahead of the conference by the United Nations show that while official development assistance increased to \$130 billion in 2013, the share commanded by least-developed countries was in decline. Among the consequences of that decline: the lack of access to at least one basic health service

of an estimated 400 million people worldwide.

The Global Fund was one of the multi-stakeholder partnerships acknowledged during the conference as helping to achieve results in the field of health, and was included in the call for enhanced international coordination and enabling environments at all levels to strengthen national health systems and achieve universal health coverage.

Suggestions floated during the lead-up to the FfD conference to provide the “enhanced global support” required for least-developed countries included the across-the-board allocation of 50% of official development assistance and duty-free and quota-free access to markets.

Stringent conditions attached to that aid, however, could mitigate their impact in countries which, despite their fragile economic positions, are loyal to the directives contained in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Even as there is a notably reduced appetite from donors to provide budget support to developing countries, it remains the preferred vehicle for foreign investment in many countries, a delegate from Tanzania reiterated during one of the conference pre-meetings.

Investment also takes many forms, reminded one African finance minister quoted by the Center For Global Development: it’s about jobs, resources and growth – it’s not just aid.

Moving away from reliance on aid is also a strategic decision, illustrated by a report on reduced donor appetite for development investment that was released on the sidelines of the event by UNAIDS and the Kaiser Family Foundation. The report found that funding to address HIV in low- and middle-income countries from nine of 14 donor governments assessed either declined or remained flat in 2014.

[The report](#) showed that most of the overall increase in HIV support in 2014 was attributable to the UK, which increased both bilateral support and its contribution to the Global Fund.

Garnering considerable attention during the four-day conference were discussions about increased domestic finance, reflecting the changes in the global and regional context and global shifts of economic strength. Participants were reminded that while official development assistance remains both relevant and critical, it will never be enough given the magnitude of the agenda.

Countries have primary responsibility for their own economic and social development, it was reiterated during a series of sessions. And, from a historical perspective, no country has ever developed by relying primarily on foreign resources.

African states, which make up the largest proportion of least-developed countries, have, however been making major strides in mobilizing domestic resources, participants at a Global Fund-organized roundtable on 14 July heard.

In the last four years, African countries in the aggregate have increased domestic resources to respond to HIV by 150%. This has only added to a doubling in global domestic investment between 2006 and 2011 in national responses to HIV, TB and malaria.

Such increases are likely to be sustained amid a recent acceleration of commitments to universal health coverage from a number of countries following the first African Ministers of Health conference convened in April 2014 in Luanda, Angola.

The conference should provide a window into donor attitudes and positions ahead of the Global Fund’s 5th replenishment, set for mid-2016.

“We’re looking ahead to the replenishment as one of the first opportunities for countries to show that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda is more than just words on paper,” said ACTION’s Bowen.

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