Advancing accountability for development and growth

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Introduction

Global development has been a core, continuing part of G20 summits since their start. Their development agenda is primarily how the G20 shows it is an outward-looking group serving the broader global community and pursuing its distinctive foundational mission of making globalisation work for all. Yet despite impressive partial gains in global development, there remains much to do if the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are to be met by 2015, and to shape the post-2015 MDGs.

In shaping an actionable initiative on development for the 2014 Brisbane summit, three pillars provide the base.

1. Development is a central component of the G20’s focus on finance, economics and growth and should thus be fully integrated and coordinated, not addressed as an afterthought on a separate track.
2. The imminent arrival of the 2015 deadline for the MDGs provides an immediate need and audience for Brisbane development initiatives which support this key priority of the universal United Nations system and global community in today’s intensely interconnected world.
3. With a still struggling global economic recovery and ongoing fiscal consolidation in many G20 members, the priority is for affordable initiatives that work for both development and growth, starting with accountability assessments for integrated impact, done by G20 governments and experts outside.

This can be done by, first, returning development to the Framework for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth and its Mutual Assessment Process (MAP) and, second, improving experts’ accountability assessments to identify which G20 summit commitments, when implemented, most impact and improve both development and growth.

Returning development to the Framework and MAP

Proposal
Return development as a key component of the Framework and MAP, to identify the impacts of development on growth, and vice versa, and how coordinated initiatives could simultaneously enhance each goal.

**Problem**

When the G20 summit’s attention turned to long-term growth in September 2009, it instituted the Framework and MAP as the core of the G20’s work. It specified five components, with development as one. This was done at the two subsequent summits, but then development was dropped. The separate Seoul Development Consensus (SDC) and Development Working Group (DWG) created in 2010 have operated as separate, subsequent add-ons, reporting through Sherpas rather than Finance Ministers. Few regarded this as the best way for the G20 to contribute distinctively to global development. Under the Framework the G20 has initiated a steadily improving accountability process, now extended to microeconomic issues such as structural reform. But development and the DWG’s implementation assessments remain apart. This hurts at a time when many G20 members have subdued or declining growth rates, and when many developing countries are becoming new sources of global growth. Development should thus be returned to the Framework and its accountability process, to create an integrated G20 growth-development assessment, strategy and narrative.

**Possibility**

Analytically, there is a consensus that growth and development are closely connected in central ways. Politically, the G20 summit has already prioritised the need for new sources of growth, has always supported the MDGs and has now taken up the task of shaping the post-2015 MDGs. With some advanced G20 members now reducing their previously projected levels of official development assistance, G20 members must consider alternative approaches to development – as highlighted by the leader-approved SDC itself. Much support for such integration arises within and beyond the G20, where for poor people and poor countries, development and growth are a single thing. The G20 should now return to such an integrated approach.

**Product**

Development would be returned to the Framework and MAP as one of the five pillars and integrated in the mix, to help inform a new G20 growth strategy and narrative. The Framework’s accountability process would include development, with a focus on how
development and growth affect each other, and how specific sorts of development can be new sources of growth. The DWG, through appropriate interaction, would contribute to the G20’s overall accountability on development. The results would be reported at the Brisbane summit in a more robust way than at St Petersburg.

Process

For a fast start, G20 Sherpas, Finance Deputies and Ministers and Framework Working Group officials could return development to the Framework–MAP and accountability work as the Australian year as host begins. At Brisbane, leaders would review and endorse the process and results, and identify how to enhance it, including support for the post-2015 MDGs.

Assessing accountability for impacts on development and growth

Proposal

An independent report on ‘Accountability Assessment for Impacts on Development and Growth’, to extend existing efforts and improve the G20’s effectiveness in securing development and growth.

Problem

Existing efforts to assess implementation of G20 summit commitments still fall short in several ways. The G20’s own dominant approach of asking specific international organisations for assessments on selected issues leaves many issues uncovered, and produces varying methodologies and reporting procedures. The G20’s self-produced assessment for development in 2013 does not highlight country-specific, time-specific information and induces scepticism about the high grades the G20 gives itself. Independent academic assessments tend to focus on governments implementing action from the time the commitment was made to the next summit, or for a single and variable period in the past. They do not focus systematically on the impact of implementation in achieving the desired results in the areas under scrutiny, or those beyond. Publics thus still wonder about the G20’s effectiveness, coherence, transparency and legitimacy. G20 leaders do not reliably or rapidly know if their personal, public summit commitments are being kept, and those responsible for doing so do not have important feedback to help them do a better job.

Possibility
Analytically, academics have recently produced assessments of G20 commitments, including two focused on development that together prove the possibility of assessing implementation impacts on development, and on related goals such as employment, after a subsequent summit and from processes within member governments. Other studies of groups similar to the G20 have made suggestions on how to craft commitments to raise or lower the compliance that eventuates.

Politically, there is a growing demand from G20 governors for improved accountability assessments, including those done independently by experts with no stake (as public policy advocates) in the results. British Prime Minister David Cameron publicly praised such an effort in his concluding remarks at the 2012 Los Cabos summit. At their first meeting to prepare the St Petersburg summit, G20 Sherpas spent two hours in discussions with the authors of two extended implementation studies. Looking ahead to Brisbane, the Australian preparatory team solicited advice from such analysts on how to improve accountability assessments. Some G20 leaders have expressed regret that the G20’s ability to deliver on its decisions has been in decline, and have called for improved accountability assessments as well.

Product

To advance beyond the prevailing stunted silo approach to accountability assessment, the G20 should facilitate the production of an extended Accountability Assessment for Impacts on Development and Growth, with the following components:

1. The identification of all commitments from the St Petersburg summit, highlighting those the leaders themselves initiated, discussed and personally approved.
2. The ranking of these commitments, by social scientists and expert stakeholders, for likely development impact.
3. The implementation of these commitments, starting with the highest ranking ones.
4. The actual impact of this implementing behaviour, within the initial period until the next summit and beyond, on development and growth, and key connectors such as equity.
5. The processes producing implementation, to identify improvements.

Process

An independent analytic would do this work, supported by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Participants, including those from developing countries, would meet
periodically with the G20’s own assessors to share and compare methods and data, best practices and the consensus about consequences and causes. An Accountability Conference, appropriately timed before Brisbane, could initiate this process, and publicly release the initial integrated impact assessment’s results. At Brisbane, leaders would briefly discuss the process and report and agree on further steps.

Notes

1. Co-director, G20 Research Group; Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto; Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China.


4. G20, St Petersburg Accountability Report on G20 Development Commitments (St Petersburg, 28 August 2013).

