

Round Table 4: Managing for Development Results

Managing for results means managing and implementing aid in a way that focuses on the desired results and uses information to improve decision-making.

The Paris Declaration

Key Points from the Evaluation

1. Judging by the Monitoring Survey's indicator for progress in managing for results¹ – which would be a demanding standard for most industrialized countries – very few partner countries are found to have quality results-oriented strategies yet, and progress since 2005 is generally assessed in the evaluation as being gradual and modest. Consistent with this, donors' reliance on countries' results-oriented and monitoring frameworks is reported to be the exception, not the rule. Progress is generally stronger at the sector level, but the move to national level is challenging. There are also difficulties in finding common ground on indicators, data sources and use of national systems.

2. A number of country evaluation reports, however, revealed progress in particular areas and ambitious near-term plans to launch strong national systems. There may actually be under-reporting on managing for results due to a lack of shared understanding and clear definitions around the concept.

3. The partner countries evaluated include some with relatively long and advanced experience in managing for results. While it is gaining in importance in other partner countries, results-based monitoring is still assessed to be the weakest link in the overall national governance systems of many countries, and budgeting, financial reporting and auditing remain discrete exercises. The systems of many countries remain focused on inputs and compliance issues and are only gradually moving to measure output.

4. Almost all donors are engaged in some sort of capacity development assistance that should strengthen managing for results – be it support to development of statistics, help in developing results frameworks, or the introduction of a "results culture" – but these efforts appear piecemeal and often tied to the specific needs or areas of intervention of donors.

5. Significantly, the indicator for this commitment only concerns partner countries' systems, but a good number of the donor evaluations document their own continuing challenges in strengthening their performance management frameworks, methodological guides, training, and staff awareness. The actual

and potential links between countries' and donors' systems is a key issue for real partnership on these issues.

6. The evaluations bring out several major reasons for slow progress in this area and show how donors are often caught – facing pressure to report on results under their own systems, but unable to count on sufficiently robust country systems or statistics as a basis and conscious that they cannot push too far for improvement of country systems. In such situations, they sometimes find themselves forced to resort to parallel systems of their own, which can run counter to their own Paris Declaration commitments. Moreover, the donor interest is often focused on results in specific areas where there are strong domestic constituencies (gender or human rights for example) and with a wish for direct attribution to the donor's own efforts. On the other hand, as one positive trend, more joint evaluations are reported in several studies.

Key Lessons

1. Many of the country and development partner evaluations have documented and helped explain the relative lack of attention and progress in implementing the Paris Declaration commitment toward managing for results. The evaluations are virtually unanimous that progress is slow toward meeting the Monitoring Survey test for what partner countries need to do.

2. But the evaluations also re-focus attention on the Declaration's other concerns about how donors need to gear their own systems and their active support to more effective country systems. It is not surprising that the existence of multiple and different results frameworks on both sides is found to hamper progress.

3. More encouragingly, the situation reported in Uganda in particular demonstrates that where information and platforms for participation exist, it is easier for donors to do their own part in meeting the Paris commitments for the better management of aid for results. The Uganda experience suggests that donors will indeed follow a country lead and contribute to promote a culture of evidence-based management across the government, using government systems and data.

¹ "Countries [have] transparent and monitorable performance assessment frameworks to assess progress against (a) the national development strategies and (b) sector programs."

“ [In Uganda] Credit is given to the government for including a results and policy matrix in the 2004 Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) which specifies targets for key outcomes and therefore provides a framework for development partners to align their interventions with the country’s development strategy and targets.

Uganda report ”

4. Finally, there are also problems in the ways in which the requirements to fulfil these particular commitments are being presented and/or understood. Some findings point to the importance of making these systems for results clearer, more robust and “user-friendly”, as a basis for mobilizing and sustaining support for poverty reduction strategies themselves.

Key Recommendations

The following steps, derived from the evaluation, are recommended for the remainder of the Paris Declaration review period up to 2010, establishing a clear basis for the five-year assessment of progress and further course corrections at that time.

It is recommended that **partner country authorities:**

1. Announce, before the end of 2008, a manageable number of prioritized steps they will take to strengthen their leadership of aid relationships up to 2010, in the light of lessons from monitoring, evaluations and other stocktaking to date.

2. Build on the interim reviews of implementation in 2008 to ensure that they have in place a continuing transparent mechanism, ideally anchored in the legislature, for political monitoring and public participation around aid management and reform.

3. Give clear guidance to donors who are supporting capacity-strengthening on their priorities for assistance to manage aid more effectively, consistent with their main development concerns.

4. Work out, by 2010 at the latest, adapted systems of managing for results that will best serve their domestic planning, management and accountability needs, and provide a sufficient basis for harnessing donors’ contributions.

The evaluations show that all are making progress with the difficult tasks of building systems of managing for results. The experience of Uganda in particular demonstrates both the feasibility and benefits

of this work. Such systems will provide the necessary base for ensuring the alignment and harmonisation of development assistance, and will strengthen the information underpinnings for mutual accountability, mainly as a by-product of transparent domestic accountability.

The perfect should not become the enemy of the good in this area, where most industrialized countries are themselves still struggling for satisfactory solutions. It is recommended that countries build on their often under-recognized experience at home, on best practices in similarly-placed countries, and on outside resources, to “de-mystify” “Results-Based Management” systems and aim to have “good enough” systems in place by 2010 to exercise the necessary leadership and direction over development and aid programs.

It is recommended that **development partner or donor authorities:**

5. Update their legislatures and publics in 2008 on progress to date with aid effectiveness reforms, underlining the need and plans for further concrete changes to be implemented before 2010 to accept and support country leadership in aid implementation and greater donor harmonisation.

6. Before the end of 2008, announce their further detailed plans to delegate by 2010 to their field offices sufficient decision-making authority, appropriately skilled staff and other resources to support and participate fully in better-aligned and harmonized country-led cooperation.

7. Specify their concrete planned steps to improve, by 2010 at the latest, the timeliness, completeness and accuracy of their reporting and projections for aid flows to feed into the planning, budgeting and reporting cycles of partner countries, together with other donors. Make the needed provisions for multi-year allocations, commitments, or firm projections.

8. Provide supplementary budgets, staffing and training up to 2010 to help their own programs adjust for the transitional and new demands and transaction costs and learning needs that are being reported as major concerns in implementing the Paris agenda.

9. Allocate special resources (budgets and coordinated technical assistance) to support and reinforce countries’ prioritized efforts to strengthen their own capacities to implement more effective cooperation. Work with partners to design and manage other interim means of implementation (such as project implementation units) so that they steadily enhance capacity and country ownership.