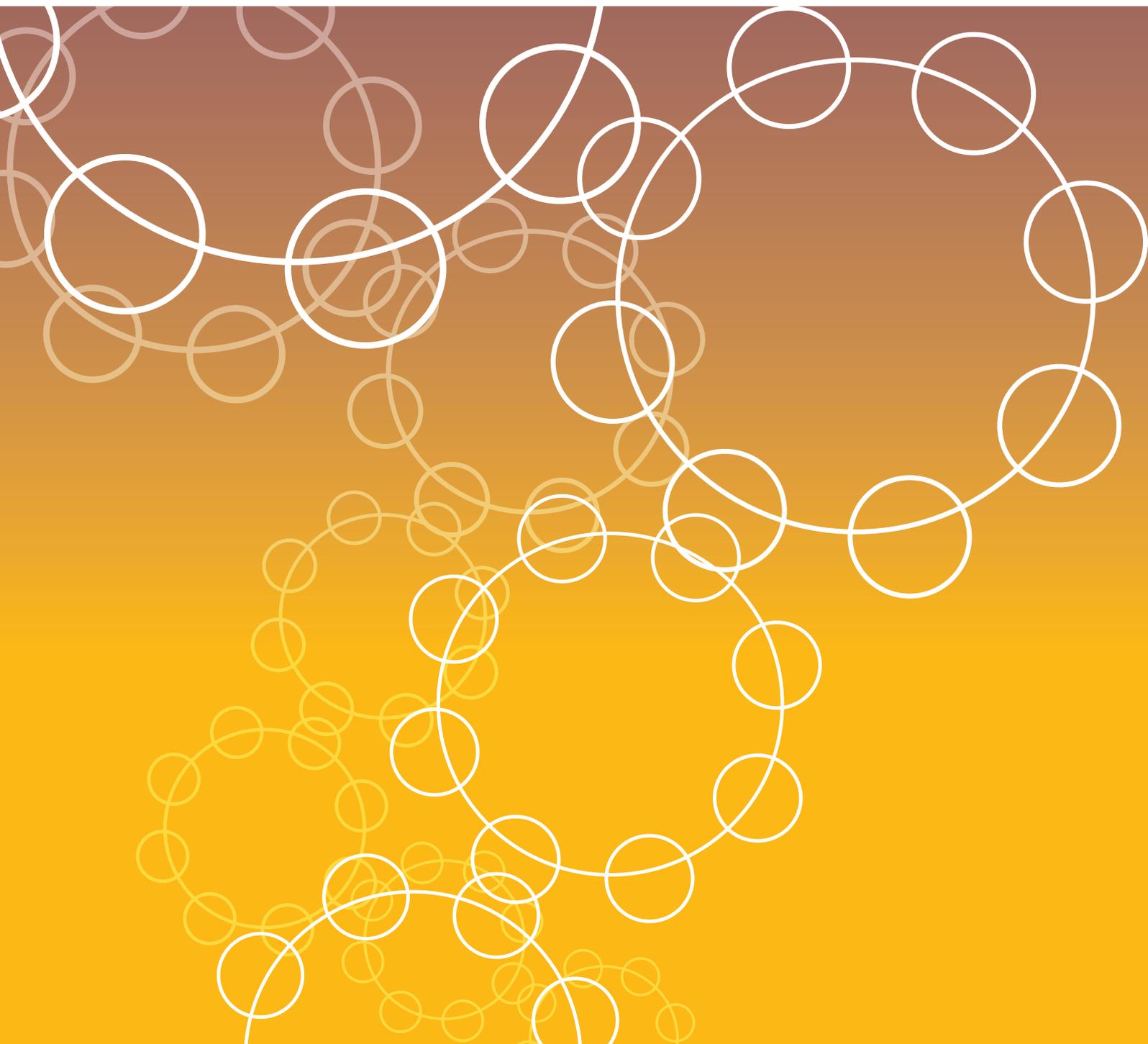


RESULTS IN DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

Provider Case Studies: United Kingdom
Department for International Development



Case studies of results-based management by providers: UNITED KINGDOM

MAY 2017

This paper is one of a series of case studies that describe approaches to results-based management by development co-operation providers. The purpose of the case study project is to identify and document approaches, key themes, current challenges and good practice in results-based management. In particular, the case studies document how providers use results information for accountability, communication, direction and learning. The case studies and an accompanying discussion paper will be used as a platform for dialogue and to drive collective learning within the OECD Development Assistance Committee Results Community.

The case studies are based on a desk-based review of relevant material and telephone interviews with staff responsible for results.

The full set of case of studies (Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the World Bank) and the discussion paper can be accessed on the [OECD results in development co-operation website](#).

OECD DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION POLICY PAPERS

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Executive summary

- ❖ The corporate results approach of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) has transitioned from an accountability and communication driven corporate results framework (2011-2015), to a more performance-focused management framework introduced in 2016.
- ❖ DFID's four level results framework 2011-2015 set the standard for corporate results approaches among development co-operation providers. The framework included a standard indicator set to measure, aggregate and attribute DFID results in the context of global development outcomes. The framework enabled DFID to measure their achievements and communicate powerful stories of global scale and reach to domestic audiences (i.e. parliament and taxpayers).
- ❖ However, there were challenges to this approach, some of which are outlined in this case study. In particular, the framework was criticised for lacking a strong internal logic (i.e. links between the different levels), not covering all the results achieved by DFID, and detracting from a country-led focus. Perhaps most importantly, top-down corporate results targets were seen to lead to a lack of flexibility in terms of programming and delivery.
- ❖ In 2016, DFID introduced a performance framework which measures and reports against 14 standard indicators (a combination of outcomes, outputs, inputs and quality standards). This approach will be supported by a new aid management platform to enable measurement and use of results information at multiple levels.
- ❖ DFID works bilaterally in 32 countries and claims strong adherence to principles of country ownership. Operational plans set out DFID's bilateral approach from 2011 to 2015. New country level plans will take into account the full range of UK aid delivery channels. DFID may face a challenge ensuring country level approaches are both country-led and make use of existing systems.
- ❖ At project level, DFID faces a challenge in finding a realistic balance between meeting corporate communication and performance requirements, and enabling adaptive and flexible results approaches.

1. Overview of Results-Based Management

The United Kingdom's (UK) overarching aid policy is set out in their whole of government [Aid Strategy](#) (2015). The Department for International Development (DFID), which delivers the majority of aid, operationalises the strategy via their [Single Departmental Plan 2015-20](#) (last updated September 2016).

Both the strategy and plan address **four high level objectives** for UK's aid delivery:

1. Strengthening global peace, security and governance
2. Strengthening resilience and response to crisis
3. Promoting global prosperity
4. Tackling extreme poverty and helping the world's most vulnerable.

The objectives are meant to be mutually reinforcing – all support poverty reduction, are aligned to national (UK) interest, and are underpinned by the principles of value for money and delivering efficiently. To give a sense of scale and focus, total ODA provided by the United Kingdom in 2015 was USD 18.7 billion, and 59.4% of this was programmed bilaterally, with the remainder as core contributions to multilateral organisations (OECD, 2016: 271).

This case study documents the current results-based management approach of the United Kingdom (via DFID) at corporate, country and project levels, and explores challenges at the different levels. The predominant focus of the case study is on how DFID measures and manages the results of *bilateral aid*.

1.1 Corporate level results

DFID's corporate approach to results-based management has transitioned. Between 2011 and 2015, DFID implemented and measured against a corporate results framework on four levels known as DFID's Results Framework. In 2016 DFID developed a set of fourteen headline indicators, which are used to measure progress and achievement against the Single Departmental Plan. Both approaches, as well as future developments, are briefly summarised here.

DFID's Results Framework 2011-2015

DFID's Results Framework was designed to deliver results information on four levels. The purpose of the framework was to improve accountability to both parliament and taxpayers. The framework was also seen as serving a direction purpose, enabling DFID to monitor what works and what doesn't and make adjustments accordingly (DFID, 2014a: 1). The table below depicts the four levels of the results framework and the results information provided in each. The architecture of the framework is similar to that which is used by multilateral development banks (for example the World Bank), and other Development Assistance Committee providers (for example New Zealand).

Table 1. DFID 2011-2015 Results framework structure

Level	Description	Example indicator
Level 1: Progress on key development outcomes	Monitored overall development progress. This level included 22 indicators reporting global/non-attributable results categorised under seven of the Millennium Development Goals.	<i>MDG 1 eradicating extreme poverty and hunger: Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age.</i>
Level 2a: DFID results	Monitored DFID’s bilateral spend and included 22 indicators categorised under nine sectoral pillars. Results from the indicators were directly attributable to DFID. Each indicator was ascribed annual and whole of period targets, and linked directly to funding. The indicators were mostly output based “reach ¹ ” indicators.	<i>Poverty, vulnerability, nutrition and hunger: Number of children under five, breastfeeding and pregnant women reached through DFID’s nutrition-relevant programmes. Target 2011-2015: 20 million.</i>
Level 2b: DFID multilateral results	51 multilateral indicators reported non-attributed results from the multilaterals to which DFID provided core contributions, with the specific multilateral specified.	<i>Education: Number of teachers trained, Asian Development Bank.</i>
Level Three: Operational effectiveness	Operational effectiveness indicators across four performance areas: portfolio quality, pipeline delivery, monitoring and evaluation, performance against structural reform plan.	<i>Portfolio Quality Index-based on weighted self-evaluative ratings of the extent to which project milestones (outputs) are achieved. Weightings are based on the budget size of projects.</i>
Level Four: Organisational efficiency	Indicators measuring organisational efficiency. Used to monitor improvements in efficiency in human resources, employee engagement, workforce diversity, finance, procurement and estates.	<i>Employee engagement index²</i>

Source: DFID, 2104a

Results from the framework were and have been used extensively to communicate DFID’s achievements in the context of wider development. Statements like the following are used widely in external communications to demonstrate the results of DFID’s aid investment:

In 2015, it is estimated that DFID support immunised approximately 20 million children, saving 250 000 lives (DFID, 2016a: 7)

The Single Departmental Plan indicators

Alongside all UK government departments, DFID is required to measure and report against indicators aligned to their Single Departmental Plan (SDP) (DFID, 2016a). To address this requirement, and as the previous results framework period drew to a close, 14 headline indicators were introduced in

¹ Reach indicators is a term used to refer to indicators which focus on volume, and count the number of beneficiaries who are reached by a service or intervention.

² See for example results: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-civil-service-people-survey>

2016 (known as the SDP indicators). Twelve of the indicators are directly matched to one of the four strategic objectives and two have more of an internal value for money focus (indicators 13, 14 below). Together, the indicators represent a performance framework³ for DFID and have either an input, output or performance management focus. Eight of the fourteen indicators have five year targets against them, which are linked directly to commitments made in the current government's manifest. Table two below presents the full indicator set mapped to strategic objectives and with five year targets where relevant.

Table 2. DFID Single departmental plan targets and indicators 2015-2020

Strategic Objective	SDP Indicator
1. Strengthening global peace, security and governance	1. Proportion of DFID Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget spent in fragile states and regions. Target: At least 50% per year
	2. Number of countries supported by DFID to manage their public finances (including natural resources and extractives) more transparently
	3. DFID spend on improving tax systems. Target: Double the spend on improving tax systems by 2020
2. Strengthening resilience and response to crisis	4. Number of people reached with humanitarian assistance (food aid, cash and voucher transfers) through DFID support
	5. DFID spend on climate. Target: Increase climate funding by 50% to at least GBP 5.8 billion by 2020
3. Promoting global prosperity	6. Levels of development capital investment
	7. Development impact portfolio score for CDC*
	8. Number of lives saved by immunising children against killer diseases. Target: Immunise 76 million children, saving 1.4 million lives
	9. Number of children under 5, women (of childbearing age) and adolescent girls reached by DFID through nutrition-related interventions. Target: 50 million
	10. Number of additional women using modern methods of family planning through DFID support. Target: 24 million 2012-2020
	11. Number of children supported to gain a decent education. Target: Help at least 11 million children in the poorest countries gain an education
	12. Number of people with sustainable access to clean water and/or sanitation through DFID support. Target: 60 million
	13. UK Official Development Assistance as a proportion of Gross National Income (GNI)
4. Tackling extreme poverty and helping the world's most vulnerable	14. Portfolio Quality Index (PQI)

* CDC is the UK's Development Finance Institution. DFID holds 100% of the issued share capital of the CDC Group plc, an investment company which invests in private sector businesses throughout Africa and South Asia to create jobs and make a lasting difference to people's lives in some of the world's poorest places.

Source: DFID 2016a, SDP indicator sheets, found [here](#).

It is important to note that none of the results indicators are new. Indicators 7-12 (in table above) measure development results at output and outcome level and have been retained from the 2011-2015 results framework. The indicators that were retained have a human development focus and

³ The SDP indicator set is classified as a *performance* rather than a *results* framework, because of the strong internal focus and the use of input data.

are recognised as being easier to aggregate and report against than others with more of an institutional strengthening focus (for example from the justice sector) (OECD, 2017). Transparency is important, and detailed methodological notes and datasets are available for each indicator online.

DFID reported results against the SDP indicators for the first time in their 2015-16 annual report (DFID, 2016b). Results are presented by strategic objective and are contextualised with case stories and narrative on policy influence. For example under Strategic Objective 2 (indicator 4) DFID reported that the UK:

Reached 5.1 million people including 1.6 million women and girls with humanitarian assistance (DFID, 2016b: 22)

The report goes on to provide case stories on individual humanitarian responses, for example reporting that DFID reached around 10 000 families with hygiene and sanitation facilities in the immediate aftermath of the 2015 Nepal earthquake (DFID, 2016b: 22-23).

Enhanced Systems

Alongside the new corporate level framework, DFID is working on building and strengthening results systems from the bottom up, to ensure capacity and tools are in place for reporting (OECD, 2017). DFID's 2016 bilateral review refers to investment in a new aid management platform which will improve both collection and management of results; in turn enhancing the use of results information for decision making (DFID, 2016c: 48).

The bilateral review also emphasises a three pronged approach to results-oriented programming by following the "money, the people and the outcomes," including:

- *Money*: going further than they already have with **transparency**
- *People*: increasing use of **beneficiary feedback** for steering and decision making
- *Outcomes*: scaling up the **payment by results** approach (see box) (DFID, 2016c: 44-49)

In addition, a key takeaway from the accompanying *multilateral* review is that core funding to multilaterals will be more closely linked to performance. This will in turn lead to more detailed scrutiny of the 'results on the ground' achieved by the multilaterals that DFID funds (DFID, 2016d).

Section two on challenges below provides further insights on lessons learned from DFID's results framework and how these have fed into development of the new corporate approach.

1.2 Country level results

DFID delivers aid bilaterally in 32 countries (and three regions), and articulates a strong commitment in its publications to taking a country-led approach to delivery (in line with Busan commitments) (DFID, 2016b: 37).

Between 2011 and 2016, programming at country level was documented in operational plans (introduced in 2010, for the period 2011-2015 or 2016) which set out how DFID planned to work in each country, and the results they expected to achieve, including which of the level two indicators each country would contribute to and the targets for the period. Operational Plans originally also included a full country-level results framework as an annex, but these are no longer mandatory and

were phased out in most countries (ICAI, 2015: 14). DFID country offices were required to report back against level two indicators once every six months.

Ghana's operational plan 2011-2016 was reviewed for this case study. The plan specifies seven level two results which would be achieved, specifying baselines as well as targets for the period (DFID, 2014b: 5). The plan goes on to explain how individual projects will be monitored and evaluated and where DFID will work with partners in-country to build capacity for monitoring and evaluation. Of note, DFID has a dedicated strategy, results and transparency office in-country. While there is no specific reference made to Ghana's own goals or results framework in the document, the document implies a strong partnership approach to monitoring and evaluation and to building capacity for monitoring and evaluation on the ground (DFID, 2014b).

A new tranche of operational plans will be available to the public by the end of 2017. The 2016 bilateral review suggests that in the next round of operational plans DFID will be taking more of a:

complete and comprehensive approach to each country, developing a coherent package of support that includes a range of DFID delivery channels, as well as cross government funds and UK aid disbursed through international financial institutions and other multilateral organisations (DFID, 2016c: 51).

Here we see – in line with other providers – an updated approach to country strategies which takes a whole of country aid approach as opposed to just focusing on bilateral. Challenges relating to taking a country-led approach to results in this context are discussed more in section two.

1.3 Project level results

New Smart Rules introduced by DFID in 2014 provide an operating framework for programming and project-cycle management in DFID. The rules encompass the full project cycle including results-based management, and are founded on an acknowledgement that the increased complexity of the development landscape requires 'leaner' and more adaptive programming. The document makes a distinction between *rules* and less rigid *quality expectations*. Overall the rules have been developed to provide the "basis for flexible programming – where results can be achieved innovatively and at a pace which is focused on outcomes" (DFID, 2016e: 7).

In practice this means there are no longer standard log frame requirements (though a template is available, which most use). A set of standards (as different to rules) for results frameworks advise that at minimum, results frameworks (or log frames) should be:

- impact weighted
- specify assumptions
- include baselines, indicators and targets.

There is an emphasis on using results frameworks as living documents that are not finalised until early implementation and are then continuously updated throughout the project life cycle (DFID, 2016e: 73-74).

DFID project leads complete self-evaluative annual reviews and project completion reviews, which include ratings on the extent to which outputs have been achieved (these provide the raw data for

the Portfolio Quality Index introduced in tables one and two above) (DFID, 2016e). In line with DFID's transparency commitments, all project level frameworks and results are published on DFID's [DevTracker website](#).

Box 1. DFID is promoting Payment by Results approaches (2014)

The 2016 Bilateral Aid Review makes a commitment to “*follow the outcomes*” by further developing and scaling up the use of Payment by Results approaches. The UK sees itself as “leader in international efforts to test innovative and outcomes-based payment by results approaches” (DFID, 2016c: 48) and believes paying for results incentivises efficiency, flexibility and accountability. During 2015-16, 74% of the value of new centrally procured projects included a payment by results element (DFID, 2016c: 48).

The review promises that DFID will go *beyond* the approach articulated in their 2014 [Payment by Results strategy](#), which provides a useful conceptual framework. The strategy defines Payment by Results as any development investment where payment is made *after* the achievement of pre-agreed results (whether they be outputs or outcomes), not before (DFID, 2014c).

Payment by Results approaches are divided into three broad categories: results based aid (to partner governments), results based financing (to service providers), and development impact bonds (to investors). DFID acknowledges that payment for *outcomes* (rather than outputs) is still relatively rare, and this is an area they are committed to developing by building an evidence base of what works in what context (through robust evaluation).

Payment by Results approaches are widely recognised as enhancing focus on results and performance, while also enabling a flexible approach, with the focus of monitoring and funding moving from *how and whether* projects are implemented according to milestones, towards the ultimate results achieved, thus creating space for more innovative modes of delivery.

DFID's overall objectives for Payment by Results are to build the evidence base and develop capacity. More detail is provided on specific actions to achieve these objectives, though no specific targets for their achievement are included.

DFID is one of the first DAC providers to highlight a commitment to Payment for Results via a strategy. The 2016 Bilateral Review promises to further foster this approach as it works alongside others to build evidence and capabilities.

2. Challenges to Results-Based Management

The sections above provide a brief overview of DFID's results-based management at corporate, country and project levels. This section highlights challenges and lessons learned that will be applied as the results agenda is progressed within DFID.

2.1 Corporate level: Lessons learned from DFID's 2011-2015 results framework will inform a new approach

DFID's 2011-2015 results framework was the first of its kind for a DAC donor and was successful in increasing the results focus of not only DFID, but of other donors who have and continue to replicate the architecture of the results framework. Reviews and evaluations have highlighted a number of lessons learned from the implementation of DFID's results framework. In particular, an internal review completed in 2014 focused on strategic, operational and technical aspects of level two of DFID's results framework (DFID, 2014d), and an external review the following year looked more widely at DFID's approach to impact, taking results-based approaches into account (ICAI, 2015). Relevant findings from these reviews are briefly summarised below.

Overall, DFID's 2011-15 framework was found to be somewhat reductive; with aggregated level two results not adequately capturing *all* of DFID's efforts (the 2014 review estimated that the framework measured results from around half of DFID's investments (DFID, 2014d: slide 9)). The framework was also criticized for prioritising short term results and 'reach' indicators over long term impact or change. Both reviews recommended building more focus on outcomes and impact into future results frameworks, with a suggestion to move away from direct attribution towards reporting DFID's *contribution* to development outcomes (thus enabling use of more qualitative measures).

The reviews also acknowledged that the links between the four levels of the framework were not always apparent, i.e. how do the attributed results at level two link to country-level results at level one? And to what extent does the performance data at level three contribute to the achievement of development results at levels one and two? Similarly, the lack of a narrative of how project level results link through to country and to corporate levels was also highlighted.

As such, top down indicators and targets may detract from a more adaptive and context aware country-level approach, and can potentially lead to perverse incentives for particular programming choices. DFID's revised results approach, which amounts to a significantly less 'top heavy' corporate results framework, and a more flexible approach to project monitoring takes the lessons briefly summarised here into account. However, DFID still faces a challenge in determining whether or how to incorporate the SDG goals, targets and indicators into their corporate approach⁴, thus enabling a link between DFID's direct results and its contribution to global development goals and outcomes.

2.2 Country level: Challenges to building a partner-led approach to results-based management at country level

Building on the lessons outlined above, the 2014 internal review contended that DFID's results framework was not designed to support country-led approaches and that more needs to be done to advance Busan commitments, including making use of country-level results frameworks and building the statistical capacity of partners. The report acknowledges however, that building contextualised country level results into a corporate framework is not a simple task (DFID, 2014d).

⁴ DFID retains the policy oversight for the Goals, while the UK Statistics office will report on domestic progress against the SDGs.

The 2014 OECD Peer Review also highlighted this tension, pointing to the existence of a ‘dual track’ results system (i.e. separate processes at country and corporate level) – and recommended that more could be done to make use of results to drive dialogue with partners in-country (OECD, 2014). The 2015 ICAI report emphasised a lack of results orientation in country-level operational plans. The review analysed a sample of operational plans and found them to be ‘relatively weak as portfolio management tools’ (ICAI, 2015, p.14). The review suggests stronger contextual analysis alongside analysis of partner country priorities and more in-depth analysis of the in-country donor landscape. The report also recommends development of longer term outcome goals at country level alongside output targets with shorter timeframes (ICAI, 2015).

The 2014 internal review notes the value of having statistical advisers based in country offices to assist with collection and reporting of data against corporate indicators in operational plans. However, the review also notes that data quality issues remain and that more could be done to quality assure data at collection point (DFID, 2014d). As noted, DFID is working on a new platform for collection and aggregation of results. However, some caution may be required to ensure DFID continues to support building existing in-country statistical systems and capacity alongside creation of a results-capture system to meet DFID’s internal reporting and management requirements.

As noted above, the latest bilateral review suggests a more strategic and cross government approach to country level portfolio planning. It will be a challenge for DFID to ensure that a new country strategy approach is results oriented, aligned to partner country priorities and results frameworks, as well as being logically linked to the new corporate framework and global goals.

2.3 Project level: Adaptive management versus performance management

The 2015 ICAI review highlighted a challenge faced by many providers that is well documented: the growing tendency for project level management incentives to be focused more on disbursement milestones than active management for results or development change on the ground. The review also noted that project design and management have become less participatory over time (i.e. with less active involvement of both partners and beneficiaries), and that corporate requirements had created a reporting burden, potentially detracting resource from active management for outcomes at project level (ICAI, 2015).

Recent developments outlined in this case study go some way to address the challenges identified above:

- introduction of Smart Rules with increased flexibility for project level results management
- development of an IT platform to support project level reporting
- reduced corporate reporting requirements under the new framework
- commitment to build in beneficiary participation and feedback (via the bilateral review).

The Smart Rules have created permission space in DFID to move toward more flexible and adaptive delivery mechanisms. This includes use of monitoring tools and results frameworks which have clearly defined outcomes, but allow flexibility in relation to activities and outputs, and encourage real-time learning. The ICAI report encouraged a move towards use of results frameworks that ensure long term goals are developed, but give project managers the ability to adjust outputs toward goals accordingly, and make use of “rapid learning loops” for course corrections (ICAI, 2015).

While there is growing support for flexibility, commentators point out that there are still few examples of programmes which use adaptive management style results frameworks (with built-in learning mechanisms). More systematic approaches and greater buy-in from leadership are encouraged (Shutt, 2016; ODI, 2017).

DFID is building new platforms to strengthen and support project level results-based management. Analysis is being undertaken to identify what is currently collected at project level, and to explore ways to standardise or summarise upwards, possibly using a system to code, or tag indicators used by a multitude of partners into a set of standard indicators⁵. The goal is to create a results system generating data that can be cut and sliced at different levels, thus enhancing use of results information for project and country level steering, learning and decision making (OECD, 2017). Taking a ‘bottom up’ approach is challenging, but promising, if it can successfully allow for flexible and varied contexts while also generating aggregated data for accountability purposes.

As noted above, reduced corporate level requirements may lower reporting burden at project level. The new framework has reduced results indicators, but increased focus on performance measures. As noted earlier, *output rating scores* in annual and end of project reports are translated to a Portfolio Quality Index, used in DFID’s internal management information dashboard, as well as for the new performance framework. The scores attract a lot of attention internally as one of the few comparable quality measures not solely based on inputs (OECD, 2017). Quality assurance and moderation of the scores is via internal peer review by different departments. A recent external review found that scores in the annual reviews tend to be more positive than the completion reviews (though the two ratings are combined in the Portfolio Quality Index). The review also found that ratings are gradually increasing over time (since their introduction in 2012) (AIDLEAP, 2016). As such, a focus on the Portfolio Quality Index as a performance measure *may* affect the quality of reporting. Further, there may be another challenge for DFID to ensure that the focus of project reporting (including ratings) remains on learning and management towards outcomes, in line with the intentions of the Smart Rules.

3. Summary: How DFID Uses Results Information for Accountability, Communication, Direction and Learning

DFID’s 2011-2015 Departmental Results Framework was introduced to generate increased **accountability** for results to UK tax payers and parliament. The framework’s architecture enables monitoring of results and performance at multiple levels. Notably, it enabled DFID to effectively **communicate** the volume of its achievements and the extent to which commitments had been met. The use of aggregated, attributable indicators allowed DFID the opportunity to use big numbers to tell a story of reach and achievement.

Aspects of the framework which worked best have been retained in the new SDP indicator set, which enable DFID to **communicate** how it is tracking against its 2015-2020 manifesto commitments annually. This framework will be supported by a new platform which enables DFID to track and use results for both **direction** and **learning** at different levels. DFID has learned through implementation

⁵ For example, the [Humanitarian Data Exchange](#) groups data from multiple sources into standard indicators using a tagging system.

of the 2011-2015 framework that a focus on outputs and targets can detract attention from impact, and from country ownership of results.

At project level, DFID has introduced new processes which favour adaptive, flexible and results-focused approaches to results-based management, taking into account stakeholder and beneficiary feedback. These developments, alongside new platforms for results reporting can enhance use of results for **direction** and **learning** at country and project level. In addition, a commitment to build on payment by results approaches will contribute to a strong results focus.

DFID's refreshed corporate approach, with a reduced indicator set, is focused on performance and domestic accountability. Supported by the right systems, this may allow space for new ways of working at country and project level which take into account the rapidly changing contexts in which DFID works. This case study reviews the results approach of DFID during a time of transition, and as such documents what was done, what was learned from what was done, and how this will inform DFID's results approach in the future.

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