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In this Issue

News and Events

From 18 to 22 March 2002, the United Nations will convene an International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, to address key financial and related issues pertaining to global development. An unprecedented feature of this event and its preparatory process is the active participation of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation, and various UN-organisations, as well as representatives of civil society and the business sector.

Financial policy makers will look at development through the perspective of finance, addressing relevant "national, international and systemic" issues and seeking means to ensure sufficient financing for global development. The provisional agenda of the event covers six main themes:

Mobilising economic resources within countries
Increasing the flow and broadening the reach of private international investment
Opening access to markets and ensuring fair and equitable trade regimes
Strengthening official development assistance
Addressing developing country debt difficulties
Improving the coherence of global and regional financial structures and the fair representation of developing countries in international decision-making.

More info on the summit-level meeting can be obtained at: http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/

Advancing the policy and practice of capacity building in international development cooperation

Pooling of Technical Assistance

The search for new aid delivery mechanisms to enhance capacity development is high on the agendas of international development cooperation agencies. The pooling of funds for technical assistance (TA) in the context of sector-wide approaches and other new aid mechanisms is one response to the increasing criticisms of development cooperation.

This issue of Capacity.org presents the results of a study on the pooling of funds to finance technical assistance, which was undertaken by ECDPM on behalf of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This study is part of the ongoing reflection within the development community on how to harmonise their procedures in order to reduce both the fragmentation of externally funded development activities, as well as the considerable administrative burden they impose on developing country administrations. The study is based on six country reviews undertaken in Botswana, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda, and on discussions with representatives of international development agencies (IDAs). It is hoped that the study will encourage attempts to bring the abstract thinking on improved aid management practices to the operational level. The study addressed a number of key questions:

To what extent is pooling a useful tool for harmonising donor procedures? When and where is it most effective?
Does pooling provide a mechanism for enhancing national ownership?
What are the capacity and procedural constraints faced by both developing countries and IDAs to using pooling more extensively?
To what extent is pooling contributing to changing aid management practices, in particular the relationship between governments and the international development community and the practices of that community?

In answering these questions, the study has reviewed the broader and changing context of international development policy and activities. The summary presented here offers a somewhat provocative view of the issues related to the pooling of TA, particularly the role of national ownership, the capacity of both developing countries and IDAs to manage such pools, and the procedural constraints to doing so. It also describes three different approaches to aid management, offers a framework for thinking about TA pooling and provides a list of selected documents that have influenced the current debate.

If you have any questions on this study, or wish to order a hard-copy version of the report, please contact cb@ecdpm.org.

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The Pooling of Technical Assistance: An Overview based on Field Experience in Six African Countries

The following is a summary of a broader study on the pooling of funds to finance technical assistance (TA) in the context of sector-wide approaches (SWAps) and other new aid mechanisms. Pooling refers to the sharing or transfer of resources among development organisations to support the policy objectives of a developing country. This study forms part of the ongoing reflection within the development community on how to harmonise their procedures in order to reduce both the fragmentation of externally funded development activities, as well as the considerable administrative burden they impose on developing country administrations. It must also be seen in the context of the long-standing debate about how to increase the impact of TA, here defined as the transfer, adaptation, mobilisation and utilisation of services, skills, knowledge and technology. TA includes short- and long-term personnel from both national and foreign sources, plus training, support equipment, consultancies, study visits, seminars and various forms of linkages.

The results of the study will hopefully contribute to the discussions of a number of development policy formulation groups of bilateral and multilateral funding agencies. It also aims to provide practical guidance to development workers in the field on where pooling is an appropriate instrument and what steps can be taken to increase its prospects for success.

In the mid-1990s, the international development community began to devise policy and procedural reforms to bring a new style and direction to development cooperation. These reforms, which have been selectively implemented by most IDAs, include the sector investment programme (SIP) used mainly by the World Bank, and the sector-wide approach (SWAp, see Box 1) that is favoured by a number of bilateral donors. Both mechanisms are intended to introduce more coherent planning and implementation of development interventions at the sector level, according to the priorities set by the national government, and to reduce the administrative burden on all development partners.

Within these collaborative arrangements, the pooling of funds to pay for TA (see Box 2), both outside and within SWAps, has been proposed as a means to reduce the fragmentation of development activities and to encourage country leadership.

Current status and contribution of TA pooling in six countries

The study involved six country cases - in Botswana, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda - focusing on the management of TA and collaborative efforts such as pooling. There is an increasing amount of pooling in most of these countries except Mali, where donor collaboration is limited, and in Botswana, which does not generally encourage donors to work together. (For an overview of the different approaches to aid management see Box 3.) Current levels of pooling are still relatively low, and loose pooling is the most common form, reflecting the restrictions faced by some IDAs.

In most of the countries reviewed, serious *capacity shortages have slowed progress* in the pooling of TA. Such shortages are exacerbated by complex coordination mechanisms, such as SWAps, which often result in the need for additional TA to address capacity gaps. *Although the goal of SWAps is to increase ownership by the developing country, the result can sometimes be the opposite.*

The gradual trend to more TA pooling is not yet having a major impact on *national ownership*, although collaborative schemes generally reduce fragmentation, create more space for national ownership and have symbolic benefits. On the other hand, IDAs have initiated many schemes, but ownership of them is not immediately apparent.

Small, context-aware and context-sensitive initiatives, following an incremental approach to reform, stand a better chance of success than grand, ambitious and one-size-fits-all schemes. They may also generate a greater sense of ownership.

The use of TA pooling, by itself, does not appear to lower the overall quantity of TA, especially in the early years of collaborative programmes such as SWAps. In addition, despite hopes that TA pooling would enable national governments to source TA from countries offering cheaper expertise, such as Cuba and Asia, there has been *no apparent lowering of the costs of TA*. Despite the rhetoric about untying, *many IDAs are reluctant to untie aid flows* that would shift procurement either to such countries or to other OECD countries. Furthermore, *local TA, especially in Africa, is becoming increasingly expensive*, with remuneration levels often approaching those of personnel from OECD countries.

Assessments of the efficiency gains from TA pooling have been mixed. Most collaborative initiatives have proven to be far more labour intensive, time consuming and organisationally complex than their advocates had predicted. This is especially true of SWAps that in some cases have incurred transaction costs at a level that is difficult to justify. There are, however, emerging signs of efficiency gains as both governments and IDAs learn about which category of TA pooling works best in what situation, and for what reason.

In some cases, *TA pooling highlights the comparative advantages and costs of different providers*, and thus increases transparency.

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Box 1: SWAPs

A sector-wide approach (SWAp) is a method of working between and among governments, IDAs and some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in which significant funding for a particular sector is provided to support an agreed sector policy and expenditure programme, under government leadership, using common approaches across the sector. Many such approaches involve the use of government procedures for disbursing and accounting for the funds provided. SWAPs are usually underpinned by a set of principles that emphasise the need for national ownership, national execution and policy dialogue. They aim to bring greater coherence to a sector by:

- adopting a programme rather than a project approach;
- reducing the fragmentation of development cooperation efforts;
- working within a shared policy and financing framework; and
- strengthening the national institutional capacity.

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There is some evidence of a *correlation between the use of TA pooling and the crafting of better sector strategies and policies.* But it is important not to overstate the impact of TA pooling on the development of broader programme strategies. Deeper structural trends in collaborative activities, such as the improved donor-government climate in Tanzania, are of far greater importance.

Factors shaping the use and contribution of TA pooling

Five interrelated factors appear to shape the use and performance of TA pooling:

The policies and organisational context within the country. Most governments encourage the use of multiple funding channels as a means of financing TA within sector programmes. At the same time, they emphasise the importance of controlling the purpose and use of TA as opposed to its procurement and contracting. This position implicitly recognises the burden that the latter functions place on administrative and financial management systems.

The behaviour within the international funding community in relation to TA pooling. This is influenced by three interconnected factors: policy and procedural restrictions, the strategies IDAs have developed for the use of TA and the incentives within organisations to change their approaches. Conservative TA strategies and organisational incentives within IDAs that do not clearly support pooling have discouraged activities in some countries, such as Mali.

The structure and management of the broader aid relationship between the government and the IDA community in a particular country. Where the culture of collaboration is strong, TA pooling is more likely.

Relationships within the international funding community in a particular country. If a group of donors shares a common vision, pooling is more likely. In Tanzania and Uganda, cohesive groups of 'like-minded' donors, mostly from Europe, have participated in SWAPs and in some forms of TA pooling.

The design and management of sector programme support. Much as in the broader aid relationship itself, sector mechanisms are a form of collective action. At each stage in their organisational development, the shared trust that underpins their functioning must be sustained by careful management and the right kind of organisational incentives.

Suggested improvements in support of TA pooling

The results of the study suggest a number of reforms and improvements that could be made to encourage TA pooling, many of which are quite provocative. Most of them are also general in nature and will require more in-depth analysis before they can be made operational.

Significant increases in the use of TA pooling will require a *rethinking of the means and ends of TA. TA has become a focal point for criticism,* but the problems are often due to features of the environment in which it is used - the lack of clarity of purpose, dysfunctional management structures, inadequate salaries for regular public servants, etc.

At the same time, the current tendency in some circles to reject TA, particularly long-term expatriate TA, as unnecessary is an overreaction to its weaknesses. In a world in which all countries are competing for skills and intellectual capacity on a global

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Box 2: Pooling of Technical Assistance

Key characteristics
- The TA activity must involve some collective action among IDAs and national partners, with the goal of producing a development result.
- There must be some sort of sharing, collaboration or transfer of resources among the partners.
- The activity must be explicitly designed to support the agreed policy objectives of the partner country.

Major types of TA pooling
- Full TA pooling is the option with the greatest degree of transfer of resources and control to the national partners, who both contract and direct TA personnel.
- In mixed TA pooling, the TA personnel are managed by national authorities but the contracting is done by one of the international development agencies (IDAs) providing financing.
- In loose TA pooling, the least collaborative of the three approaches, the direction of the TA personnel is shared among the various partners. Personnel are normally contracted individually by one or more IDAs, often on a tied basis.

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Box 3: Three Approaches to Aid Management

Three approaches to structuring the relationship between the government and the aid community are instructive. In Botswana the approach is the classic 'country-dominated' model. It has assigned a role to TA - long-term and gap-filling - that is now out of favour within the international development community. Another emerging model is that of Tanzania, where the approach has done much to foster trust, collaboration and country ownership of development cooperation over the last five or six years. The third approach, as applied in Mali, has been less successful - the relationship between the government and IDAs is tense and there is little trust.

Botswana

In Botswana the approach involves a combination of strong country direction and aid integration, based on four key principles:

All development cooperation is channelled through the national planning and budgeting system. Aid-funded projects must be included in the national development plan, which is approved by parliament, and must have assigned budgets and resources.

All TA, whether free-standing or linked to specific projects, is contracted by the government, integrated into the human resources planning of the public service and assigned to established posts. Separate project and advisory posts are not created.

The government, through the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, ensures aid coordination by conducting all dealings with international funding agencies on a one-to-one basis. Sectoral ministries do not enter into separate agreements. There are no consultative or roundtable groups. Donors are encouraged to harmonise their procedures with those of the government.

The government has proven itself more than willing to refuse offers of assistance that do not meet the needs of Botswana, a stance that is made easier because of the significant revenues from diamonds.

The findings of the study echo the conclusions of other observers: 'the classic ills of technical cooperation so often cited: e.g. lack of ownership, too many stand-alone projects, parallel structures, burdensome procedures and accounting requirements, lack of coordination and poor sustainability, seem hardly to figure in Botswana's 30-year experience of cooperation with development partners'. Determined and capable country leadership has reduced the choices available to IDAs, and in many ways makes their organisational lives much simpler.

Mali

The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) commissioned an aid review in Mali covering the period 1996-98. One of the main conclusions highlighted the fragmentation of IDA interventions and the cumulative impact of literally thousands of separate official visits, monitoring missions and evaluations. In response, the government of Mali set up an Aid Reform Secretariat in the Ministry of Finance with a mandate to review organisational structures, strategies and procedures. The IDAs were also requested to consider ways to improve harmonisation within the system. After two years of work, however, the results of this reform effort have been disappointing.

The major agreement to date has been on the level of per diems paid to national consultants. There has been little harmonisation among IDAs, who do not even use Malian manuals or procedures. In some cases they have failed to honour agreements that they themselves helped to create.[1] There has been little collaboration of any kind. Neither the government nor the IDAs have shown the determination or leadership needed to induce more collaborative behaviour. Donors are disappointed in the achievements of the exercise and the tensions between Mali and the IDAs are far greater than in the three other countries surveyed by the Sahel and West Africa Club of the OECD. Several donor agencies commented that they would be reluctant to undertake a major exercise of this nature again. The end results have been a lack of ownership of collective approaches, a decline in mutual confidence and increasingly individualistic behaviour - the opposite of the situation in Tanzania (see below).

Tanzania

By late 1994, the relations between the government of Tanzania and the international funding community had become strained and unproductive despite more than 30 years of cooperation. In 1995, the Danish government hired a team of five trusted interlocutors, both foreign and Tanzanian, to suggest improvements that would be considered by both the government and the international community. The resulting report put forward a set of operating rules or a code of practice for managing the relationship, plus a set of issues whose resolution would be regularly monitored by independent advisers. The government and the IDAs have recently agreed to institutionalise the process by forming an advisory group with two donor-nominated representatives, two government-nominated representatives and one from the wider African community.

The new arrangements put the government in the lead in managing the aid relationship, a move aimed at improving coherence and reducing fragmentation. Fora have been put in place at central agency and sector levels for collective dialogue in problem solving in order to build trust and transparency. There are currently 15 aid coordination sub-groups involving both funding agencies and the government. The performance of both the government and the international community is assessed and graded on a regular basis. In contrast with the Botswana model, the Tanzanian approach sees the aid relationship as more of a collective endeavour, which needs clear rules of the game and a means of mediating in disputes.

(1) OECD, Sahel and West Africa Club, *Analyse des résultats du questionnaire sur la gestion de l'aide.*

basis, *we see little justification for reducing TA for its own sake*. In countries like Mozambique, capacity gaps are increasing and TA can play a useful role, perhaps even in filling operational gaps. Botswana provides an interesting example of how this can be done under local guidance and management and with local ownership.

Better frameworks for assessing progress in capacity building are required. A thorough organisational analysis seems to be one of the missing links in attempts to make TA pooling more effective.

Strategy development frequently has *to balance the need for detailed, up-front preparation and more incremental approaches* to learning by doing. The most successful schemes tend to evolve slowly. *Moving too quickly on reform efforts or on too grand a scale can backfire*, as was the case in Mali. The partners also need to work together to think through strategies.

A decision to proceed with TA pooling, especially full pooling, needs a clear assessment of the *organisational support required for success*, including the need for working groups, dedicated administrative units and codes of conduct.

The *harmonisation of IDA procedures is critical* for TA pooling. At the same time, many of the potential opportunities for TA pooling and procedural harmonisation

depend on the willingness of IDAs *to work within the national administrative, financial and legal systems* (see Box 4).

Box 4: Harmonisation

Harmonisation is the process by which IDAs seek to reduce the transaction costs for both their country partners and themselves by standardising their operational policies and procedures. These procedures apply to activities such as planning and programme design, reporting, procurement, contracting for services, the terms and conditions for national and foreign TA personnel, financial control and management, performance monitoring, auditing and budgeting. A number of IDA representatives also point out that the harmonisation of procedures cannot be separated in any meaningful way from the harmonisation of IDA policies. One obvious means to improve harmonisation would be for all participating IDAs to use government systems as long as these meet acceptable standards.

Under pooling arrangements, the 'controller' roles of TA will likely diminish as national governments take control of TA to support their own interests. *Substitute control arrangements* (e.g. improved reporting, monitoring, evaluation and auditing) will then be required to provide IDAs with the confidence they need to maintain their financial support.

TA pooling can function best within *restructured development cooperation relationships between countries and IDAs*. At the heart of the reforms required for such restructuring are country leadership, mutual learning, greater cohesion and more collective action. Progress towards each of these goals will require serious thought and planning. Such restructuring will also require *organisational reform within the international funding agencies* whose structures are not always supportive of these goals.

Conclusions

The review has shown that pooling of TA is still in its infancy, although there are some modest but promising signs in several of the countries examined. The move to pooling is part of a broader change in the design and management of international development cooperation, at the core of which is the emphasis on country ownership and control. In the years ahead, the challenge will be to encourage more pooling that promotes such ownership and control, while at the same time maintaining quality programming and effective implementation. At the same time, pooling of TA can not be de-linked from structural reform efforts (e.g. public sector reforms). It also can only be implemented in an environment with adequate capacity to direct the process, or where the necessary capacities can be created within a reasonably short time, e.g. through special incentive schemes to attract capable persons into the civil service.

ECDPM Papers on Pooling of Technical Assistance:

Baser, H., and P. Morgan [2001]. The Pooling of Technical Assistance. An Overview based on Field Experience in Six African Countries. Maastricht: ECDPM. Synthesis Report.

Land, T. [2001]. Taking charge of technical cooperation, experience from Botswana: a case of a country firmly in the driver's seat. Maastricht: ECDPM. Mimeo.

Pavignani, E., and V. Hauck. [2001]. The pooling of technical assistance in the context of aid management reform: the Mozambique case. Maastricht: ECDPM. Mimeo.

Thioleron, E., and I. Dante. [2001]. Mise en commun de l'assistance technique dans les programmes sectoriels du Mali. Maastricht: ECDPM. Mimeo.

Todd, M., and A. Shimeles. [2001]. Pooling of technical assistance in the context of SWAps: Ethiopian case study, Maastricht: ECDPM. Mimeo.

Wangwe, S.M. [2001]. Study on pooling of technical assistance in the context of sector-wide approaches: the case of Uganda. Maastricht: ECDPM. Mimeo.

Wangwe, S.M., and L. Madete. [2001]. Pooling of technical assistance in the context of sector-wide approaches. Maastricht: ECDPM. Mimeo.

All of these reports can be accessed at: http://www.ecdpm.org/en/pubs/ta_case_studies.htm .

An Emerging Framework for thinking about TA Pooling

The table below presents an analytical framework for thinking about TA pooling. The points listed in the table may be useful in responding to some key questions:

What are the *advantages* of each approach for the various development partners? And as perceived by whom? Are all the partners clear about what they will have to give up in order to secure these advantages?

Which *enabling conditions* are critical, as opposed to supportive, particularly with respect to implementation? What will make these three pooling approaches work, and why?

What are the *risks* of these three approaches, and how can they be minimised? To what degree can and should they be understood in advance?

What *situations* are most suitable for the three types of pooling?

Type of TA Arrangement

FULL POOLING	MIXED POOLING	LOOSE POOLING
ADVANTAGES (may be perceived differently by different stakeholders)		
Government in charge and makes decisions on what TA should lead to improved management skills and reinforced ownership	May require less time to put in place than full pooling	May be put in place relatively quickly and thus can support strategic innovations
Can reduce coordination costs between IDAs and government in the long-term	Relieves governments with limited procurement and contracting skills of some management responsibility	Little pressure on local management systems
Can reduce competition among IDAs	Can reduce coordination costs between IDAs and the government in the long term	TA often chosen by common agreement to reflect recognised national or individual competencies of IDA countries
Complete transparency provides opportunity to compare the costs of TA from different sources	Less risk for donors	(Perversely) governments may be more willing to admit local capacity gaps and use international TA if the costs are not known
Less opportunity for IDAs to make requests for TAs to service them rather than ministries.	Reporting to donors may be easier than with full pooling	Off-line nature provides funding for activities not funded through the central system
(For central government agencies) funding is usually on budget and is centrally controlled	(For sectoral ministries) control is more decentralised	Since requirements are less onerous, a broader range of IDAs can be involved
Allows IDAs to support objectives in areas where they have no comparative advantage	Allows IDAs to support objectives in areas where they have no comparative advantage	(For sectoral ministries) control is more decentralised
		(For donors who must show attribution) the role of each donor is evident and reporting is through their own systems.
ENABLING CONDITIONS		
Good preparatory work among IDAs and government to produce stakeholder consensus on a sectoral strategy and on an M&E strategy	Good preparatory work among IDAs and government to produce stakeholder consensus on a sectoral strategy and on an M&E strategy	Agreement among a limited number of IDAs on the appropriate use of TA
Good IDA-government relations	Reasonable IDA-government relations	
Willingness of IDAs to take risks	Some willingness on part of IDAs to take risks	
Full untying authority	Willingness of government ministries to give up individual projects	
Willingness of government ministries to give up individual projects	One IDA prepared to take the lead and set up fund	
Reasonably competent and honest local management who are not overburdened with other activities		
Solid government procurement procedures for both domestic and international purchasing		

Type of TA Arrangement

	FULL POOLING	MIXED POOLING	LOOSE POOLING
RISKS	Can take a long time to put in place	No opportunity to build up local procurement capacities through experience	No opportunity to build up local management capacities
	Lowest common denominator thinking can hinder innovation	Pool could be IDA-led, thus undermining local ownership	The government's needs and preferences may not be given adequate attention, resulting in a lack of ownership
	Individual foreign TA may be unwilling to sign contracts with individual governments	Little transparency on costs	Pressure to use international TA, even if inappropriate, because of tied funding
	Political pressure to divert funds for other uses	Tendency to use more international TA than is necessary because of tied funding	No transparency with regard to costs
	Procurement and financial systems not adequate to prevent corruption		Harder for governments to coordinate
	Inadequate local expertise to meet all TA needs, resulting in rising costs		Possibility of overwhelming governments
	Pressure to use local or regional TA even if inappropriate or overly costly		IDAs have more opportunity to start their own initiatives, which may not respect government priorities
	Funds may be deducted from central budget allocations to individual ministries, thus reducing ministry interest		

WHERE SUITABLE

FULL POOLING	MIXED POOLING	LOOSE POOLING
Where amortisation of up-front transaction costs is possible over a large-scale activity	Where amortisation of up-front transaction costs is possible over a medium- to large-scale activity	When activities are small in scale and heavy transaction costs can not be amortised
Where there is a high degree of trust between the government and IDAs	Where the trust between the government and IDAs is weaker than in the case of full pooling, or IDAs have not developed strong collaborative mechanisms in the country concerned	Where there is little trust between the government and IDAs, or where IDAs have not developed strong collaborative mechanisms in the country concerned
When hiring small numbers of individual TA staff (many IDAs may be reluctant to open large contracts to international tendering because they would lose out to lower-priced competitors)	Where considerable international TA is appropriate	Where untying authority is severely restricted
When hiring national TA is a priority	Where IDAs have comparative advantages that can be utilised	
When linkages between foreign TA and a specific IDA may create suspicions of bias	Where the government's management and procurement capacity is weak, but where there is an overall strategic vision	
Where the government has good procurement capacities as well as an overall vision		

Update: UNDP's Review on Reforming Technical Cooperation for Capacity Development

Over the recent months, the UNDP's project on Reforming Technical Cooperation for Capacity Development (http://www.capacity.undp.org) has gained momentum. Activities to date include seven country and seven focus studies, two electronic fora - organised by ECDPM and involving approximately 800 participants (http://www.capacity.org/undp) and two roundtables, organised in collaboration with the World Bank Institute. These activities have focused on three principal themes: readiness of donors, recipients and the development industry to change. The purpose of the initiative is to inform and reinvigorate the international debate on the role of TC in capacity development and to encourage reforms and practices more likely to develop sustainable indigenous capacities.

The next step in the project will be a third round table meeting in February in Ghana, which will bring together a high-level and largely political group to discuss TC reform. Policy recommendations resulting from the project will be presented to donor coordination meetings at the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD (http://www.oecd.org). Two books will also come out of the process. The first is a collection of articles by UNDP staff and a team of selected experts proposing out-of-the-box approaches to TC for capacity development. This book, *Capacity for Development: New solutions to old problems*, will be launched at the Financing for Development Conference in Mexico. The second book will draw together the findings and results from the entire exercise and is expected to be published in the summer of 2002.

Bibliography

Bossuyt, J. (et al.). 2000. Assessing trends in EC development policy: an independent review of the European Commission's external aid reform process. (ECDPM Discussion Paper, 16). Maastricht: ECDPM. http://www.oneworld.org/ecdpm/pubs/dp16_gb.htm
This study, commissioned by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), provides a 'snapshot' of the ongoing reform process. Based on a desk review and consultations with EC officials (DG DEV, RELEX, Trade), it presents an independent assessment of the proposals for the reform of EC aid from a broad development perspective and identifies key challenges to further improving the performance of EC aid.

World Bank. 2001. Education and health in Sub-Saharan Africa: a review of sector-wide approaches. (Africa Region Human Development Series). Washington: World Bank. http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSServlet?pcont=details&eid=000094946_01032006582818
This report reviews the experience to date of the Africa region in the Bank with the sector-wide approach. It summarises the lessons learned, identifies the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, and provides guidance and advice to operational staff in the Bank as well as partner agencies and governments who are involved in sector-wide approaches.

Kanbur, R., T. Sandler, and K.M. Morrison. 1999. The future of development assistance: common pools and international public goods. (Policy Essay, 25). Washington: ODC. http://www.odc.org/publications/pe25bib.html
This essay focuses on the future of multilateral development assistance, in light of the lessons of aid effectiveness over the last fifty years, and bearing in mind emerging development issues. It represents a first step in setting out the broad directions in which development assistance should evolve and concludes that the common pool approach and the IPG (International Public Good) framework must be developed further in terms of their operational implications, pragmatic implementation, and the conceptual relationship between them.

Van de Walle, N., and T.A. Johnston. 1996. Improving aid to Africa. (Policy Essay, 21). Washington: ODC. http://www.odc.org/publications/afraid2.html
Although much analysis and many recommendations have been directed at improving the giving of aid by donors, little attention has been devoted to improving the use of aid by African governments themselves. The Project on Aid Effectiveness in Africa, a collaborative research effort involving paired research institutes in seven donor and African countries, was initiated to help address this oversight and to examine ways to improve the aid relationship. This essay synthesises the project and offers recommendations for improving aid effectiveness.

Walt, G. (et al.). 1999. Managing external resources in the health sector: lessons for SWAps. Health Policy and Planning, 14(3). http://heapol.oupjournals.org/cgi/reprint/14/3/273.pdf
Drawing on a series of case studies from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mozambique, Zambia and South Africa, this paper asks what general conclusions can be drawn about the management of external resources, and specially what lessons could inform the future implementation of sector-wide approaches (SWAps) in the health sector. The paper ends with identifying crucial actions that will enable ministries of health to take the lead role in developing and implementing SWAps.

ECDPM. 1999. Linking sector-wide approaches with capacity. (Capacity.org, 3). Maastricht: ECDPM http://www.capacity.org/3/intro.html
This issue of Capacity.org presents experiences from the field on the relationships between sector-wide approaches and capacity development and how sector-wide approaches are dealt with in the context of partnerships between governments and development cooperation organisations.