

RESULTS-BASED DECISION MAKING IN DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

PROVIDERS' USE OF RESULTS INFORMATION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY, COMMUNICATION, DIRECTION AND LEARNING

Survey Results, August 2016

Summary

The Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) of the OECD conducted a survey of providers on their use of results information in April-May 2016. Analysis of the survey results and of recent DAC Peer Review reports indicates the following:

- Providers are making progress in their use of results information, however bilateral providers in particular have a long way to go to maximise their use of results information for direction and learning.
- While results information is being captured and used at project/activity and programme levels, there are opportunities for better use at portfolio, thematic, cross-cutting and sector levels.
- A significant number of bilateral providers report not aggregating project/activity and programme level results information at country level; the extent of links to partners' country results frameworks is unclear.
- The use of results information for accountability and communications is predominantly targeted at domestic stakeholders; few providers mention results-based accountability to, and communication with, partners.
- There is a missing middle in the use of results information between project/activity and programme levels and accountability and communication.
- Too little emphasis is attached to using results information for quality assurance and learning, and analysis of results does not appear to be driving policy formulation and strategic decision-making.
- While there is value in using results information for accountability and communications, these elements do not drive corporate improvement or sustainable development results.
- Multilateral providers have made good progress in their use of corporate results frameworks for tracking development progress and organisational performance; few bilateral providers report against corporate results frameworks.
- The use of corporate results frameworks might assist providers to be more purposeful about the use of results information for direction and learning.
- Three elements are considered to be critical in providers' use of results information: leadership and a corporate commitment and willingness to learn from results; a clear purpose for the results system; and available and reliable data.
- All providers can learn from the good practice, tools and methods of others.

Table of Contents

Summary	1
Introduction	3
Methodology	4
Section One: Corporate results frameworks and the results chain	5
Section Two: The use and importance of results information for providers	7
2.1. Collection and aggregation of results information	7
2.2. Intended and actual use of results information	9
2.3. The importance of results information for different purposes	11
Section Three: Recent progress with and factors impacting use of results information	12
3.1. Recent progress with the use of results information	12
3.2. Factors impacting providers' use of results information	13
Section Four: Incorporating and aligning with partner countries' results	15
4.1. Incorporating partner countries' results information in providers' results frameworks	15
4.2. Aligning strategic priorities with partner country priorities and results frameworks	16
Section Five: Maximising the use of results information	17
Section Six: Questions for discussion	18
6.1. How can providers improve their accountability to partners? How can better use of results information contribute?	18
6.2. What can be done to improve the understanding of attribution and contribution in development co-operation? What does this mean for the design of results frameworks?	19
6.3. How can results information better contribute to direction and learning?	20
6.4. What role should the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its universal SDGs, have in the results frameworks of providers and partners?	20
References	21

Figures/Tables

Figure 1: The results framework and the results chain	5
Table 1: Collection and aggregation of results	8
Table 2: Main focus of tracking	8
Table 3: Intended and actual use of results information	10
Table 4: Importance of results information	11
Table 5: Progress with results since 2013	12
Table 6: Factors impacting use of results	14
Table 7: Incorporating partner results information into results frameworks	15

Introduction

The mission of development co-operation is to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development in the context of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Results in the form of positive outcomes and impact for people and development are the ultimate yardstick of success for development co-operation. To deliver results, providers of development co-operation aim to manage for development results and to apply results-based decision making in their policy-making, programming, implementation and follow-up.

Each stakeholder in development co-operation has its own sets of goals and results frameworks. The scope of these results frameworks varies, as does the balance between provider-specific goals and shared development goals.

The *DAC Programme of Work on Development Results* includes a workstream on providers' use of results information comprising three elements: a survey, a workshop and a guidance note¹. A brief survey was conducted of DAC members and other providers, 19 April-6 May 2016, with a view to understanding:

- how providers use results information and the importance they attach to its use for seven areas²;
- progress made by providers in their use of results information;
- how providers' results frameworks incorporate partner countries' priorities and align with their results frameworks.

In this report, reference is made to using results information for direction and learning. Direction in this sense relates to: policy formulation and decision-making; portfolio, thematic or programme management; and programme cycle management. While quality assurance and learning are clearly different, quality assurance is incorporated into learning as used in this manner.

The survey built on prior work by the Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) including:

- an online survey³ conducted in 2013 which aimed to get a snapshot of the state of play in results management amongst DAC members and observers, which in turn contributed to
- a review identifying the main challenges faced by DAC members and observers when measuring and managing results in development co-operation⁴.

¹ The three elements are: analysis of the multiple uses of results information by providers at corporate level; a workshop, *Providers' use of results information for accountability, communication, direction and learning*, which will test the analysis and provide an opportunity for practitioners to learn about the range of ways results information is used by providers; and a guidance note, provisionally entitled *Results-based decision-making by providers*, based on the findings of the workshop and offering suggestions for how results information can be used for accountability and coordination with partners.

² Accountability; Communications; Learning; Policy Formulation and Strategic Decision Making; Quality Assurance; Portfolio, Thematic or Programme Management; Project Cycle Management

³ OECD (2013), *Managing and Measuring for Results: Survey Highlights*, OECD, Paris.

⁴ OECD (2014), *Measuring and managing results in development co-operation: A review of challenges and practices among DAC members and observers*, OECD, Paris.

Methodology

The 2016 survey was sent to all DAC members, participants and observers as well as to non-DAC OECD members and multilateral institutions.

There was a good response to the 2016 survey. Twenty-four out of the twenty-nine DAC members responded: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

In instances where responsibility for development co-operation lies with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁵, responses were mostly received from the implementing agency. In the cases of Austria and Norway, separate responses were received from the Ministry and the relevant implementing agency.

Four multilateral and regional development banks provided responses: Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Inter-American Development Bank and World Bank Group. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Global Alliance for Vaccinations and Immunisation (GAVI) also provided responses.

Where responses were unclear or incomplete, respondents were invited to provide supplementary information.

Additional information was drawn on from recently published reports of DAC Peer Reviews (2013-2016)⁶, other academic research/publications, and monitoring surveys conducted by the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (2014 and 2016 – pending).

⁵ Or in the case of Germany by the Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ)

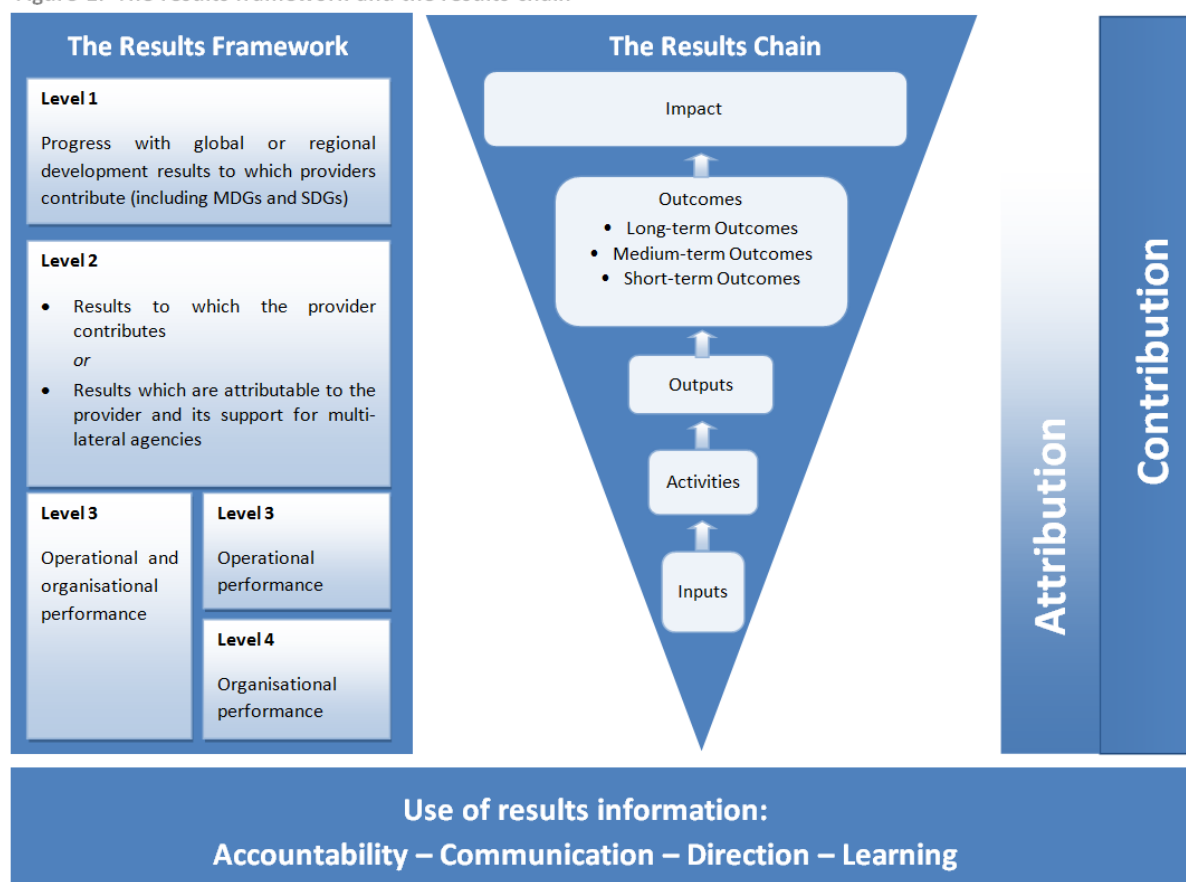
⁶ Peer Reviews were completed of: Australia, France, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland in 2013; Finland, Ireland, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom in 2014; Austria, Belgium, Germany, New Zealand and Portugal in 2015; and Denmark and Spain in 2016.

Section One: Corporate results frameworks and the results chain

The multilateral development banks, the European Union and a small number of bilateral agencies use corporate results frameworks as the basis for accountability, communication, direction and learning. Corporate results frameworks involve collection and analysis of results information at three or four levels⁷.

Figure 1 depicts the way that different types of results information relate to the levels of corporate results frameworks. It also shows that attribution becomes more difficult moving up the results chain.

Figure 1: The results framework and the results chain



In reporting results, providers tend to follow an attribution or a contribution approach. A 2013 European Commission review of providers' use of results frameworks used the following question to distinguish between the two approaches: "should the observed development result specifically be attributed to the donor agency's efforts or should the donor agency state that its efforts contributed to development results obtained by partner countries?" (European Commission, 2013, p 10). In weighing up each approach the review found:

Seen from a technical perspective, neither of these approaches is right or wrong; and the choice of approach appears to be linked to the nature of the organisation itself: the stronger the demand to account for the use of tax payers' money, the greater the

⁷ Those using four levels separate operational and organisational performance; those using three levels combine these two areas.

agency's inclination to attribute development results to its efforts. From an aid effectiveness perspective, with its focus on country ownership, it could be argued that the contribution approach may be generally more desirable.

European Commission, 2013, p 10

Level 1 of the results framework tracks progress with global development results or, in the case of regional development banks, with development results at regional level. Until 2030, the SDGs are expected to be the main focus of tracking at this level. Results tracked at Level 1 typically focus on medium- or long-term outcomes and impact reflecting the timeframe over which they are likely to be achieved. Most providers focus on the contribution they make to Level 1 results given the methodological challenges with attempting to attribute the results of their development co-operation.

Level 2 tracks progress with results achieved at country or regional levels and by multilateral, international and regional organisations supported by providers. Providers focus on either the contribution their development co-operation makes to achieving results in a country or region or on results which are more directly attributable to their co-operation. Results tracked at Level 2 are typically outputs, short-term or medium-term outcomes. They are based on results information taken from providers' projects/activities and programmes. In the results chain as shown in Figure 1, attribution is more possible at the output and short-term outcome level than at higher levels.

At Level 3, and where utilised Level 4, the focus is on providers' operational and organisational performance. In the World Bank Group's corporate results framework, Level 3 combines operational and organisational effectiveness and includes topics such as development outcomes, lending operations, advisory services and analytics products, knowledge and science of delivery for results, operational delivery for clients, financial sustainability and efficiency, and managing talent.

In DFID's results framework, Level 3 Operational Effectiveness covers portfolio quality, pipeline delivery, monitoring and evaluation and structural reform and asks the question: How well does DFID manage its operations? Level 4 Organisational Performance covers corporate functions such as finance, human resources, procurement and information technology and asks the question: Does DFID manage itself efficiently?

Section Two: The use and importance of results information for providers

2.1. Collection and aggregation of results information

Providers capture results information at project/activity level with the main focus on outputs and outcomes. An increasing number of providers track country level outcomes, using country results and results aggregated from project/activity level. Many also utilise corporate results information from multilateral and regional agencies and civil society organisations (CSOs). Progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has been an element of corporate reporting; future reporting will focus on progress towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A number of providers have established systems for aggregating project/activity level results information to facilitate reporting on sector level progress, having identified key sector outputs and outcomes. A significant number of providers report not aggregating at country level. Cross-cutting and thematic reporting remains a challenge for most providers.

A number of providers have updated their corporate results frameworks and results systems offering lessons for others who are seeking to establish such frameworks and systems.

All respondents collect results information⁸ at project/activity and programme levels with the main focus of tracking evenly split between outputs and outcomes. The 2016 survey indicates that a growing number of providers (14 of 31 responses) are collecting outcomes at project/activity level as compared with 2013 (9 of 28 responses) whereas there has been little change in providers' emphasis on collecting outcomes at programme level.

While the challenges of aggregating results are recognised by many providers – Germany notes that much information gets lost in aggregating from project/activity level to other levels – the majority of respondents (23) aggregate information from projects/programmes to capture results at sector level. Fewer do so at cross-cutting and thematic levels (18).

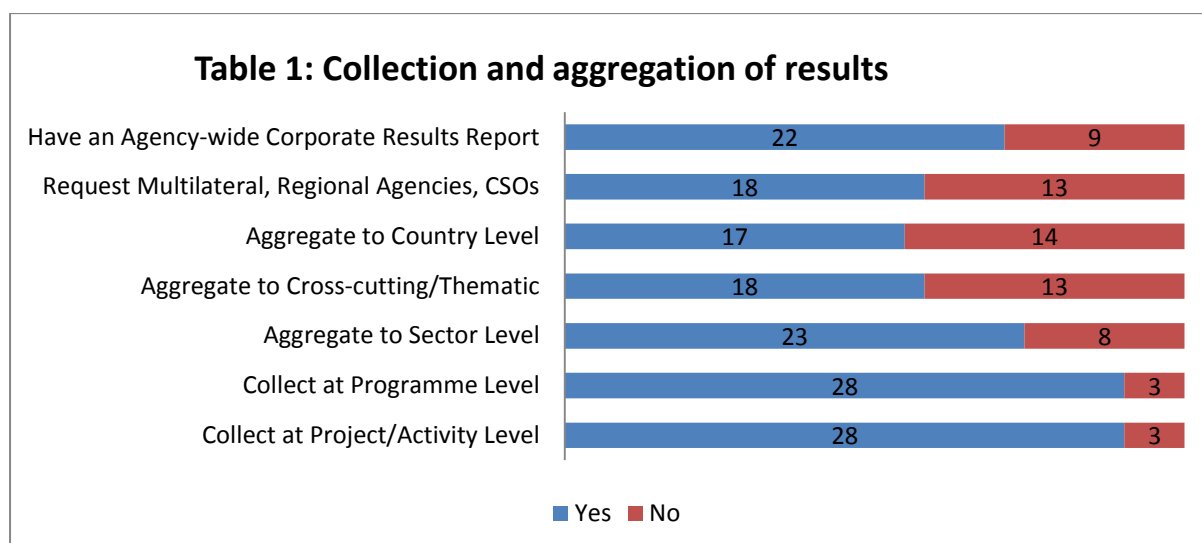
Considering the importance attached to ownership and the use of country results frameworks, Table 1 shows that a significant number of providers (14) report not aggregating information from projects/programmes to capture results at the partner country level. This number includes eleven DAC members.

Results frameworks form an important dimension of country strategies for a number of providers (multilateral development banks, IFAD, GAVI, the European Union, Denmark, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland). Switzerland also has results frameworks in place for their global programmes and New Zealand has identified an updated set of sector results.

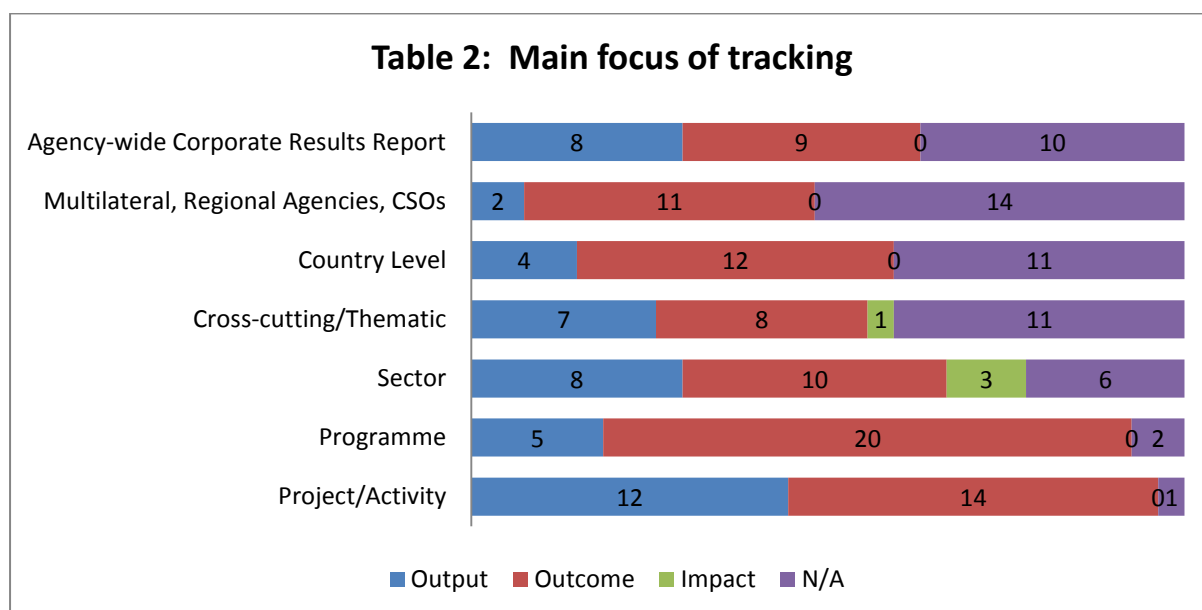
In the Netherlands, the 2017 budget will contain specific indicators and targets for the most important thematic areas. France uses a core set of thirty indicators. Ireland's Framework for Action outlines how it will achieve the results identified in its Policy for development co-operation. Global

⁸ The results chain involves inputs and activities which lead to outputs, outcomes and eventually impact (c.f. Figure 1 above).

Affairs Canada reports that its new Results and Delivery Approach will focus on fewer, more meaningful and higher quality outcomes and indicators.



As is shown in Table 2, amongst providers who aggregate results information from project/activity and programme levels to capture results at sector and country levels, a greater number focus on outcomes than focus on outputs. Responses indicate that, when providers aggregate results information for cross-cutting and thematic levels, they utilise outcomes and outputs.



Most respondents (22) report preparing an agency-wide (corporate) results report. Of the sixteen DAC members who report preparing an agency-wide results report, only half use a corporate results framework (c.f. Figure 1) against which to measure progress in a systematic manner.

Multilateral development banks and New Zealand have recently developed a new generation of corporate/strategic results frameworks.

2.2. Intended and actual use of results information

Bilateral providers use results information for two main purposes: project and programme management and accountability and communications. This information is mostly sourced from project/activity and programme levels, as well as country and sector results, and progress towards global goals.

Accountability is focused on domestic Parliaments and the public in provider countries. External communication is targeted primarily at the public in provider countries in order to maintain or enhance support for development co-operation. Both purposes draw on similar information. Providers either note how their development co-operation contributes to progress at country and global levels or attribute the results of their development co-operation to specific achievements in countries or globally.

Project/activity results and, to a lesser extent, country results are also used for project and programme management purposes.

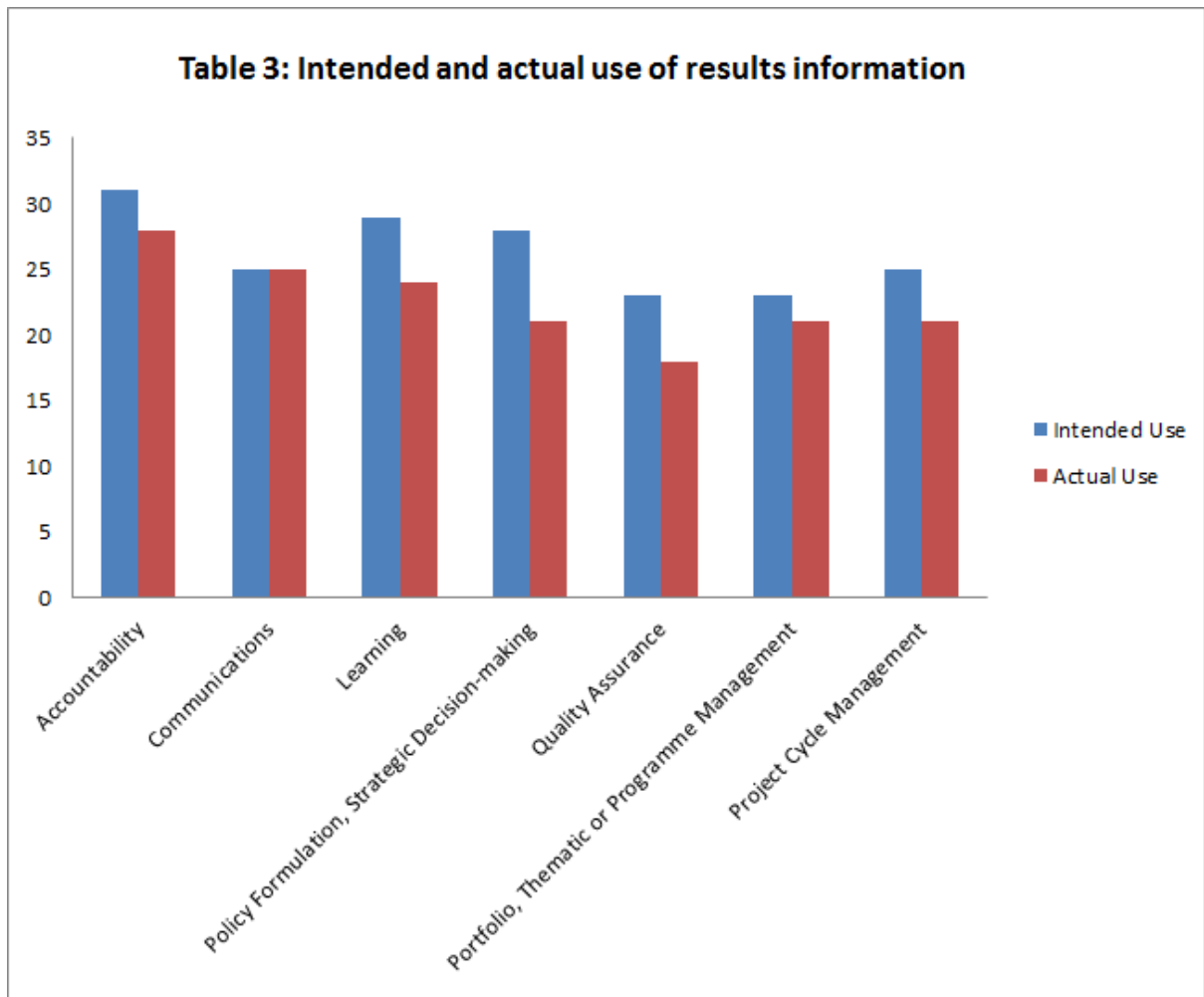
Multilateral providers draw on project/activity level results information to report to their Boards on corporate performance and achievements at country/portfolio and project levels.

A number of providers have recently established mechanisms to use results information for quality assurance, which in turn aims to contribute to learning. While bilateral providers understand that results information is important for learning, policy formulation and strategic decision-making, many struggle with using results information for these purposes. Useful lessons might be drawn from the multilateral providers, whose Boards require this, and the few bilateral providers who have made, or are making, progress with using results information for learning.

Respondents use results information for project and programme management (21) and for accountability (28) and communications (25).

Up to one third of respondents report not using results information for quality assurance (10), portfolio, thematic or programme management (9) and for project cycle management (8). Six respondents report not using results information for communications, a different mix of six report not using results information for policy formulation and strategic decision-making. Four respondents do not use results information for learning and two do not use such information for accountability.

The use of results information for learning remains a challenge for many bilateral providers with Switzerland noting the need for staff to be a lot more self-critical and a number of others highlighting the need to strengthen this area of work (Austria, Finland, Luxembourg, Norway). New Zealand reports using learning to strengthen results-based management. KOICA's evaluation office publishes lessons from project and programme evaluation on a weekly basis to enhance learning for staff. Canada reports adopting a horizontal learning strategy to ensure that lessons learned are shared across programmes.



The multilateral development banks, KOICA, Finland, New Zealand, Switzerland and Austria have formal mechanisms for quality insurance, with the latter two introducing a formal management response to annual programme reports. The World Bank has introduced project monitoring (every two years or at mid-term) and completion reviews for quality assurance and learning. New Zealand and the United Kingdom utilise annual and completion reviews which, in the case of the United Kingdom are also informed by DFID’s Approach to Value for Money. The World Bank and New Zealand utilise an independent review mechanism to complement internal quality assurance.

2.3. The importance of results information for different purposes

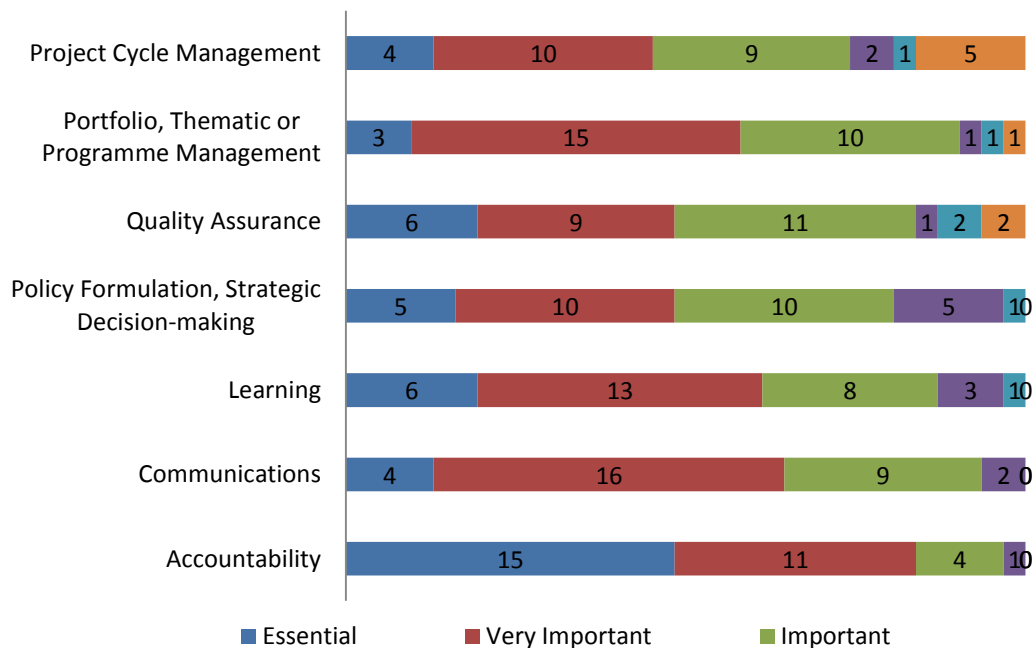
All providers recognise the importance of using results information for accountability and communication. However, few bilateral providers report against corporate results frameworks.

While providers attach importance to the use of results information for policy formulation and strategic decision-making, quality assurance and learning, responses indicate that most providers struggle in these important areas.

Providers agree unanimously that results information is important for accountability and communication. Half of the respondents (15) consider results information to be essential for accountability and a further third (11) consider it very important. While only four respondents consider results information to be essential for communications, over half (16) consider it to be very important and a further nine important.

While the majority of respondents consider results information essential or very important for learning (19) and half (15) think the same of its importance for policy formulation and strategic decision-making and quality assurance, little use is made of results information for these important areas.

Table 4: Importance of results information



Section Three: Recent progress with and factors impacting use of results information

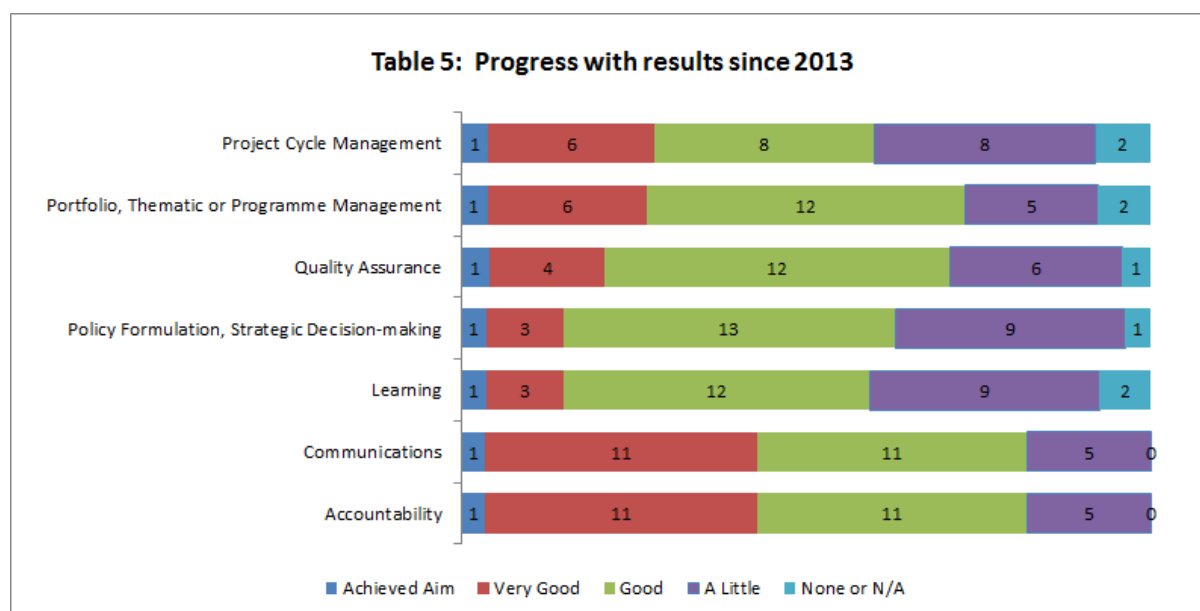
3.1. Recent progress with the use of results information

Providers have focused recent results efforts on accountability and communications including through the use of online reporting.

A number of bilateral providers have commenced work on, or updated, their results systems and others expect that the introduction of IT systems for data collection and analysis will enhance measurement of results and improve reporting.

Multilateral development banks and a few bilateral providers have developed a new generation of corporate results frameworks and tools to facilitate their use.

The majority of the twenty-eight providers who responded (22) consider that they have made good (11) or very good (11) progress with the use of results information for accountability and communications since 2013. Slightly fewer respondents report having made similar levels of progress in the other five areas, with under a third having made just a little progress with the use of results information for learning (9), policy formulation and strategic decision-making (9), quality assurance (6), portfolio, thematic or programme management (5) and project cycle management (8).



A number of factors have led to the greater focus on accountability and communications since 2013 including public interest in progress towards global goals (United Kingdom), greater public scrutiny of ODA in difficult economic times (Switzerland), and new legal requirements (Japan).

The multilateral development banks report revisions to corporate scorecards and a stronger emphasis on evidence and results in country engagement (World Bank Group), updates to corporate results frameworks (AsDB and IADB) and ongoing review of transition impact (EBRD). Following release of the New Zealand Aid Programme Strategic Plan 2015-2019, New Zealand has revised its Strategic Results Framework.

The European Union launched its EU International Cooperation and Development Results Framework in 2015. The United Kingdom has recently streamlined and simplified its rules and procedures for portfolio, thematic and programme management. Global Affairs Canada is embarking on a new Results and Delivery Approach aiming to streamline processes and ensure that results frameworks more accurately and clearly reflect the work of departments and agencies.

A number of bilateral providers report having established, or planning to put in place, IT solutions for data capture and analysis, including Austria, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Belgium (Open.BTCCTB), Denmark, France, Norway and the United Kingdom report making data and results information more readily available online.

Australia and the Netherlands have commenced annual reporting to Parliament. The AsDB presents highlights from its Development Effectiveness Review at its Annual Meeting. The European Commission has just issued its first report on selected results, covering July 2013-June 2014.

3.2. Factors impacting providers' use of results information

Critical elements required to enhance providers' use of results information include: leadership and a corporate commitment and willingness to learn from results; having a clear purpose for the results system; and available and reliable data.

Providers see the value of having appropriate incentives in place but note that sanctions can be counter-productive.

Multilateral development banks are more inclined to align their corporate results frameworks and other performance measurement systems.

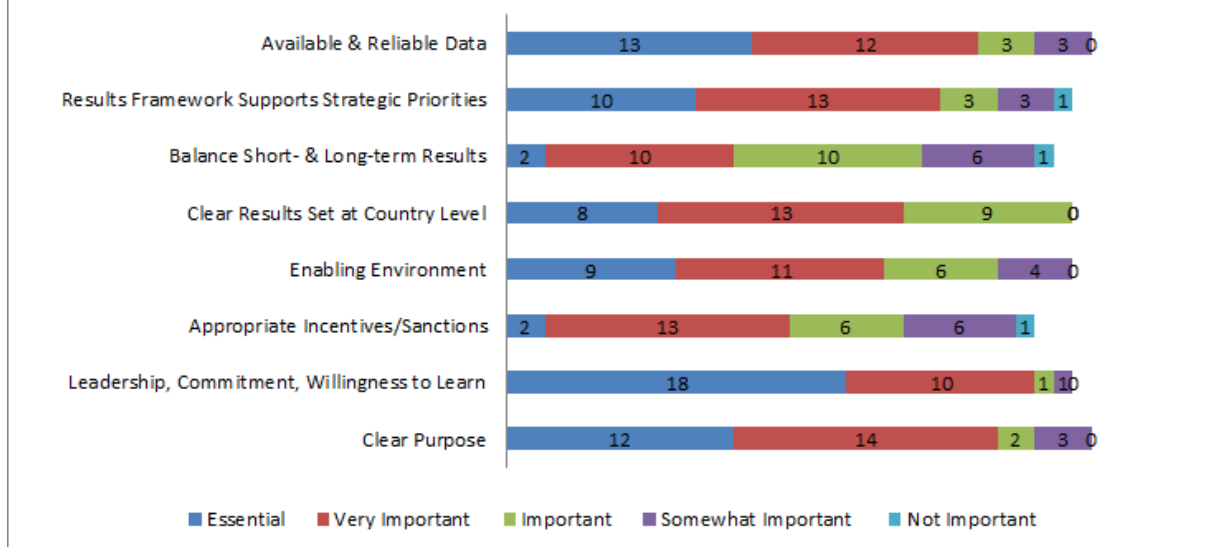
There are mixed views about whether to focus on short- or long-term results.

Three elements stand out as critical to supporting providers' use of results information: leadership and a corporate commitment and willingness to learn from results; having a clear purpose for the results system; and available and reliable data.

There is recognition of the need to have appropriate incentives for managers and staff to use results information (15). A few providers note that sanctions can be counter-productive. While most respondents recognise the need to have a balance between short- and long-term results, only twelve respondents see this as essential (2) or very important (10).

New Zealand reports a four-fold purpose for results information: decision-making, learning, accountability and communications. The IADB notes that its Corporate Results Framework is used for accountability and management purposes. Belgium emphasises the importance of ensuring that results will be used appropriately.

Table 6: Factors impacting use of results



Switzerland cautions against relying on easily quantifiable indicators and notes its focus on contribution to country results and long-term results. Others recognise the need for balance between short- and long-term results.

Some bilateral providers face the challenge of adapting to changing government priorities including greater emphasis on reporting short-term results (Spain, Belgium). The USA recognises that short-term results (outputs) can attract greater focus than long-term results (outcomes and impact) as they are easier to collect but may not be the most important information to have. Global Affairs Canada reports three levels of outcome in its results chain: immediate, intermediate and ultimate. While ultimate outcomes guide the long-term orientations of Canada’s work, the intermediate and immediate results allow the creation of a theory of change, early tracking of progress following delivery outputs and early detection of problems to enable timely course corrections.

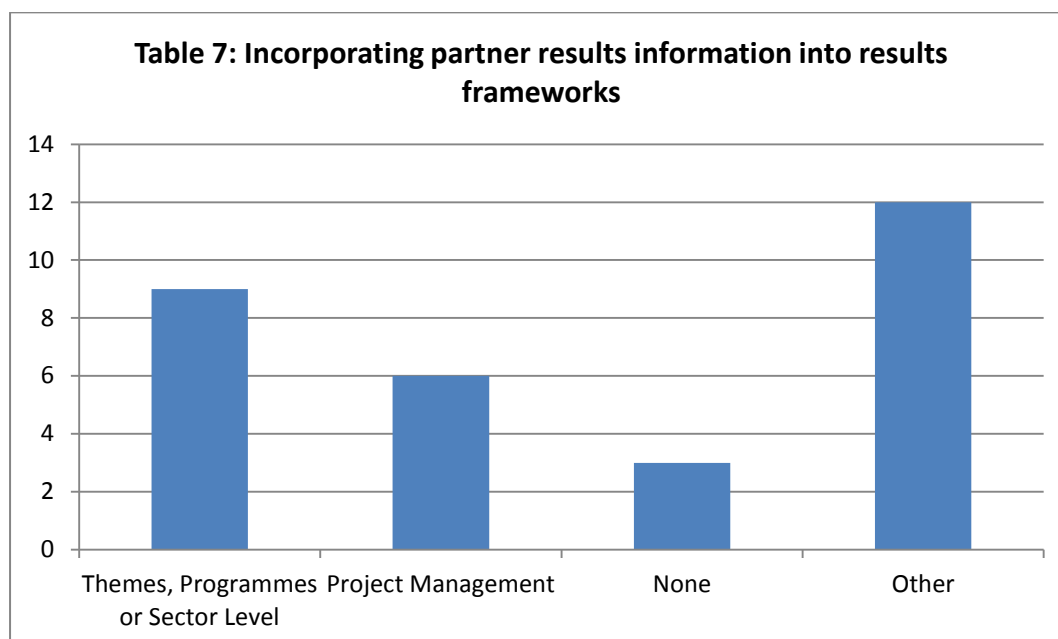
Section Four: Incorporating and aligning with partner countries' results

4.1. Incorporating partner countries' results information in providers' results frameworks

While most providers now draw on partner country results information at both project/activity and country levels, DAC Peer Review reports indicate that this is a recent change for some bilateral agencies.

Providers continue to invest in building the results management capacity of partner countries; however, this could be undertaken in a more systematic manner.

The majority of provider respondents (23) report incorporating partner country results information in their results frameworks. Half of the respondents (15) indicated that they do so at the level of themes, programmes or sectors (8) or for project management (6) with one respondent indicating it does so in both ways. Seven respondents chose not to select either of these options but indicated that, where available, country results are utilised.



Recent reports of DAC Peer Reviews (2013-2016) indicate that eleven of the seventeen reviewed members draw on partner data and results systems. However, it is not clear how this results information is used. Four DAC members are either beginning to use country data or are well aware of the need to do so having already piloted the use of partner data and results systems in one or more countries. However, in one instance partner country data is scarcely used.

While lack of capacity in partner countries and lack of available and reliable data are recognised as issues by many providers, these are not used to excuse lack of progress on results management. Eight of the reviewed members are investing in the results capacity of partner countries.

4.2. Aligning strategic priorities with partner country priorities and results frameworks

Most providers align their country programme strategies or planning documents with partner priorities and results but aggregating country and programme results remains a challenge for many.

Providers report a strong focus on accountability and communication to domestic audiences, but little mention is made of accountability or communication to partners.

Two thirds of the twenty-four DAC members who responded to these questions in the survey and one regional development bank specifically mentioned that partner country priorities are incorporated into their country programme strategies or equivalent planning document. Three DAC members and the remaining three multilateral development banks described respective processes of bilateral dialogue with country partners or consultations with their member countries enabling country priorities to be identified and included in programming documents. Four respondents were less specific in their responses. One DAC member and the two multilateral agencies did not respond to the question.

Providers report a strong focus on accountability to ministers, parliaments and boards and communication to domestic audiences, but little mention is made of accountability to or communication with partners.

Recent reports of DAC Peer Reviews (2013-2016) find no clear trends amongst members in relation to bottom-up (working up from country programmes) or top-down (starting with corporate level) approaches.

Multilateral development banks and some bilateral agencies (Denmark, New Zealand, United Kingdom) articulate priorities at corporate level and use these as a basis for discussion about development co-operation priorities with their country partners.

While Ireland has a clearly stated Policy and Framework for Action to achieve this, it recognises a challenge in aligning its various results frameworks and ensuring that these feed upwards to a corporate results framework.

The recent DAC Peer Review of Germany noted that while the two major German implementation agencies, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW Development Bank) draw on indicators and data from partner countries to create a results matrix used for programming and reporting, the Federal Ministry (BMZ) is not yet able to aggregate reporting from individual activities to generate results information to inform policy, planning and budgeting or to clarify what constitutes success and how performance might be measured.

Section Five: Maximising the use of results information

The 2016 survey and subsequent analysis indicate that, while multilateral development banks and a small number of bilateral providers have established organisation-wide mechanisms to use results information, the majority of bilateral providers have a long way to go to maximise the use of results information for accountability, communication, direction and learning.

This section summarises key elements of good practice and proposes how the use of corporate results frameworks might assist providers to be more purposeful about the use of results information for direction and learning. As noted in Section One, a corporate results framework provides structure and purpose to providers' efforts to measure what they are achieving and how they are doing so. It establishes goals against which providers' efforts will be measured and provides clarity about which results information they should collect, thereby enabling providers to maximise the use of results information for accountability, communication, direction and learning.

Reporting against development co-operation goals goes beyond accounting for the use of resources and communicating results internally and externally. It is purposeful, covers a range of areas and contributes to organisational decision-making and learning. Six dimensions of good practice are summarised below.

Collecting relevant results information: Providers do not try to use all and any results information. Instead, they focus on collecting information that is most relevant to the results being sought. Focused collection of results information at project/activity and programme levels is likely to lead to improved monitoring and quality assurance.

Quality assurance: Providers encourage a self-critical approach, reflecting on progress, including successes and failures, and considering remedial action. Quality assurance offers a feedback loop to portfolio, thematic and programme management as well as to project/activity management. It also provides information for learning across the organisation.

Learning: Providers look across the breadth of their development co-operation to determine what works and what does not, whether at country, sector, thematic or portfolio level, and for different modalities and instruments. Improvements in quality assurance are likely to facilitate better learning with flow-on benefits for improvement at projects/activities and programme levels as well as at country, sector, thematic and portfolio levels. Learning is also likely to inform communications and accountability as well as policy formulation and strategic decision-making

Policy formulation and strategic decision-making: The evidence base which providers generate through results-based quality assurance and learning provides information for policy formulation and strategic decision-making.

Accountability: Providers do not report on an ad hoc set of results or only select positive examples of progress. Rather, they focus on all relevant results – good and bad – in order to identify action to take to improve performance.

Communication: Providers focus on what is important and communicate a considered view enabling internal and external audiences to understand the successes achieved and challenges faced in development co-operation.

Section Six: Questions for discussion

6.1. How can providers improve their accountability to partners? How can better use of results information contribute?

In the 2014 review of challenges and practices that DAC members face with measuring and managing results in development co-operation, it was argued that “Results information can be used for accountability or as a management tool but these two purposes – and their implications for how and why data are collected – have a natural tendency to conflict” (OECD, 2014, p 32).

“Accountability requires being transparent and accounting for the use of aid resources to ministers, auditors, oversight agencies, or their constituencies. The use of results information focuses on communication of progress, achievements and expenditures.

“In the performance management realm, results information is used within an organisation to improve organisational performance and achieve better results. In this instance, results information is used for planning, tracking progress, learning and decision making. This requires results data to be integrated into management processes such as strategic planning, policy formulation, project or programme management, budget management, and human resource management.”

OECD, 2014, p 32

Provider responses to the 2016 survey were focused strongly on domestic accountability. Providers use results information for accountability to parliaments, boards and the public and/or for communicating to internal and external audiences. Providers appear to place little emphasis on accountability to partners.

There is value in considering at what points providers provide feedback loops to partners and what mechanisms providers use to account to partners for results?

Results information which remains at project/activity level or is only used to aggregate information for simple accountability and communications purposes is unlikely to reach partners and will not be used for strategic improvement of development co-operation.

Results information which is used in a comprehensive manner (as described in Section Five above) is more likely to add value for partners. Formal mechanisms are needed to use the information and the learning which results from reflecting on it as a means of accountability to partners.

In a context where strong emphasis is placed on reporting to political superiors, there is an additional question worth considering. Is it possible for results collected for the use of providers’ political bosses to be used for quality assurance, performance improvement and learning?

6.2. What can be done to improve the understanding of attribution and contribution in development co-operation? What does this mean for the design of results frameworks?

A recent review of the corporate results frameworks of eleven multilateral and bilateral donor agencies (Holzapfel, 2016) included an analysis of the pros and cons of attribution and contribution towards results. While half of the agencies use an attribution approach and the other half use a contribution approach, the researcher came down firmly on the side of contribution over attribution.

Attribution		Contribution	
Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables agency to account for results • Manageable at output level. Mainly related to projects • Relatively easy to calculate results – e.g. share of total programme costs applied pro rata to results achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodologically challenging • Becomes more challenging as the level of results rises above output level • No counter-factual to compare attribution of medium-term outcomes • Hinders donor harmonisation • Seen as contrary to the principle of country ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less problematic as it does not make claims about the precise quantity of results attributed to a provider agency • Values country efforts in achieving results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly criticised for producing double counts

While the review notes that the United Kingdom follows the attribution approach (Holzapfel, 2016, p 12), the DFID response to the 2016 survey notes that outcome and impact variables such as better MDG progress are difficult to attribute and a contribution approach could be used for these variables instead, but would necessarily need some care in presentation.

As an example, New Zealand’s approach is to use contribution and attribution. While Level 1 identifies contribution to global results, Level 2 focuses on results that are attributable to activities of the New Zealand Aid Programme and to multilateral agencies to which the New Zealand Aid Programme makes a funding contribution.

The European Commission’s recent Results Report (European Union, 2016) uses a contribution approach at Level 1 – Development progress in partner countries and at Level 2 – Partner country results supported by the EU. Level 2 is further divided into 2.1 EU contribution to results in partner countries: aggregated results and 2.2 Results achieved with EU contribution for individual countries: non-aggregated results.

Turning to the question of what the differing approaches mean for the design of results frameworks, an attribution approach requires providers to be specific about the expected results they seek to achieve and the actions they will take in order to achieve them. This suggests focusing at a lower level of the results chain – output and short-term outcome.

A contribution approach does not require the same level of specificity, focusing instead on medium- to long-term outcomes and impact. However, as DFID points out, taking such an approach requires care, in particular that credit is not taken by providers for results for which there is little evidence of an actual contribution. Aggregation of results within a contribution approach may lead to excessive claims of attribution, i.e. a confusion of the two approaches.

The workshop will consider the advantages and disadvantages of attribution and contribution approaches to results frameworks and the use of results information.

6.3. How can results information better contribute to direction and learning?

As is suggested above, making full use of results information is likely to strengthen quality assurance and learning and contribute to policy formulation and strategic decision-making on goals and portfolios.

Results information and the findings that arise from its analysis must be used vertically (at project, programme/portfolio and whole of agency levels) and horizontally (across functions and divisions). Formal mechanisms are needed to capture results information, analyse it and use it, together with evaluation findings, to generate learning. These should include vertical and horizontal feedback loops to ensure that learning is made available across project/activity and programme levels as well as to country, sector, thematic and portfolio levels.

In addition, as noted in Section 6.1 above, the full use of results information is more likely to add value for partners.

6.4. What role should the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its universal SDGs, have in the results frameworks of providers and partners?

Providers and their partners agree on the SDGs as a common and universal challenge, but to date there is rarely a direct link from the SDGs to the country results frameworks of partner countries or the results frameworks of providers. This is likely to change as both providers and partner countries adjust their respective frameworks in light of the 2030 Agenda.

Providers indicate that the SDGs are likely to comprise the Level 1 results in their corporate results frameworks, through which they track development progress at global or regional levels. They will need to be deliberate and transparent about the SDGs on which they will focus.

At Level 2 of corporate results frameworks, providers track the specific contribution their development co-operation makes to development progress through their interventions at project/activity, programme, country, portfolio and thematic levels. Again, it is important for providers to be clear about which SDGs they focus on and the results information they aim to capture and analyse from project/activity and programme levels in order to track progress.

Capturing and analysing results information from both levels can provide important learning which can then be made available to provider staff and to partners and serve as input to dialogue between providers and partners on how they can together achieve better results from development co-operation. A workshop scheduled for December 2016 will address these issues explicitly under the draft headline: *Development co-operation for partner goals and country results frameworks*.

References

European Commission (2013), "Paving the way for an EU development and cooperation results framework", *Commission Staff Working Document*, European Commission, Brussels.

European Union, 2016, *Results Report: EU International Cooperation and Development First report on selected results, July 2013-June 2014*, Brussels, 2016 https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/eu-international-cooperation-and-development-first-report-selected-results-july-2013-june-2014_en.

Holzappel, S. (2016), Boosting or Hindering Aid Effectiveness? An Assessment of Systems for Measuring Donor Agency Results, *Public Administration and Development*, Vol 36, Wiley Online Library. DOI: [10.1002/pad.1749](https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.1749).

OECD (2013), *Managing and Measuring for Results: Survey Highlights*, OECD, Paris. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/Managing%20and%20Measuring%20for%20Results%20-%20Survey%20Highlights%20-%20Final.pdf>.

OECD (2014), *Measuring and Managing Results in Development Co-operation: A review of challenges and practices among DAC members and observers*, OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/Measuring-and-managing-results.pdf>.