Results measurement and management

OECD — DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE (DAC)

MANAGING AND MEASURING FOR RESULTS

Survey highlights

SUMMARY

1.   As part of its ongoing work programme the OECD Development Cooperation Directorate is conducting a review on managing and measuring for results among DAC members and observers. An online survey was launched to which DAC members' and observers' results managers and specialists were invited to contribute. The objective of this online survey was to get a snapshot on where DAC members and observers are at present in results management, and use this information to foster discussions during the workshop. It focused on:

- DAC members results management systems;
- Institutional set up for results tracking;
- Management and use of results information;
- Challenges encountered when using systems for results management;
- Approaches taken to support partner country results systems;
- Results based financing modalities; and
- Possible areas of support for the DAC in future.

2.   The survey response was very good. In total, 28 out of 35 development ministries and agencies took part. Respondents included both bilateral and multilateral agencies.

3.   Overall, survey findings show that the majority of agencies measure results at different levels: project, programme, sector, country or agency. Most agencies have a unit established within their institution which specifically deals with results management.

4.   The survey shows that DAC members have many uses for results information with accountability to parliament and tracking progress highlighted as top priority uses for most. Survey findings also show that challenges in using results systems can vary depending on the agency. The most commonly cited difficulties in results management were:

- Incomplete results frameworks due to a lack of availability and reliability of data - lack of baselines or targets, unclear results;
- Difficulties in selecting appropriate indicators that measure results at the correct level;
- Difficulties in linking budget to information on results.

5.   Most agencies indicated that they supported initiatives or systems which promote quality data or use partner country results systems for their own decision making and programming. An interesting finding in the survey was that although only a small number of respondents indicated that they had established results based financing programmes, many indicated at the same time that they are now experimenting with these aid delivery modalities. Finally, most DAC members indicated that they would greatly value mutual learning and sharing of information in results management. More specific details on the survey are provided in the next section of this report[1].

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[1] This survey represents the opinions of results specialists on results management within their agencies or Ministries. Survey questions are based on multiple choice. Where more than two choices exist per question, a weighting was used to calculate the most or least predominant response. Not all questions were answered by all respondents.

SURVEY RESULTS

1. Level of results measurement

The majority of DAC members measure results across all levels (project, programme, sector, country and agency-wide/corporate) (see graph 1a). Out of 28 DAC members, 27 track results at the project level, and 26 at the programme level. 22 stated that they aggregate data to measure results at the sector level, while 18 aggregate information to measure at the country level. Nearly three quarters produce an agency wide corporate results report.

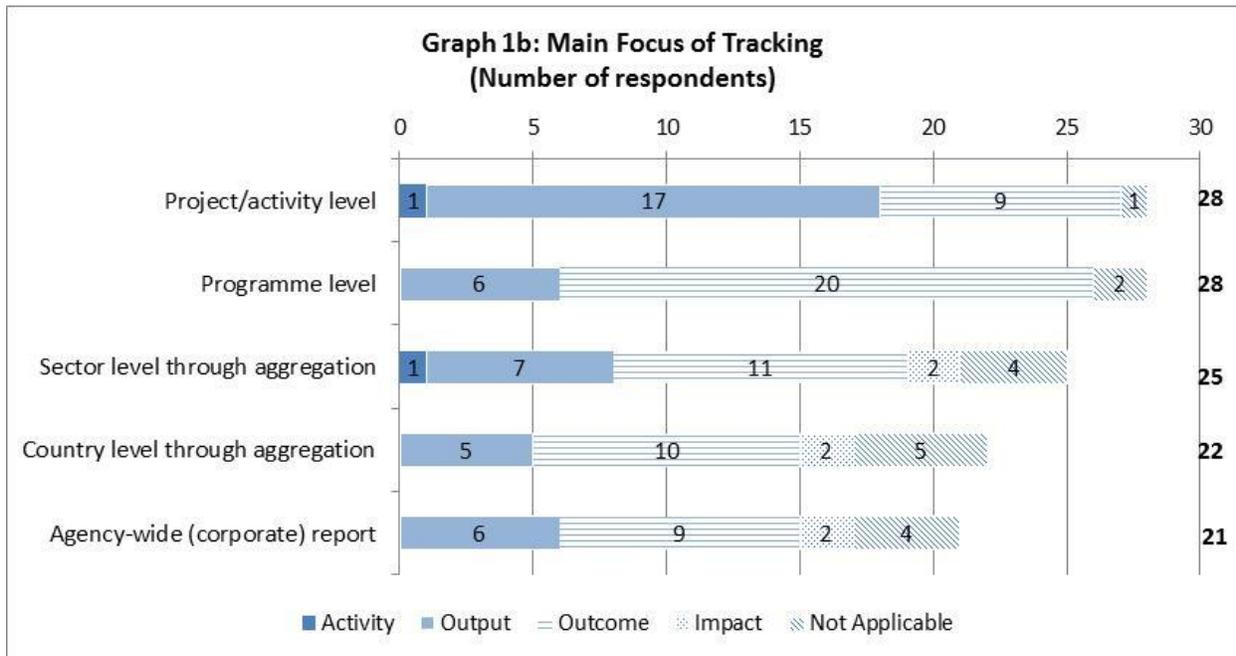Graph 1a: At what level do agencies measure results (Number of respondents)
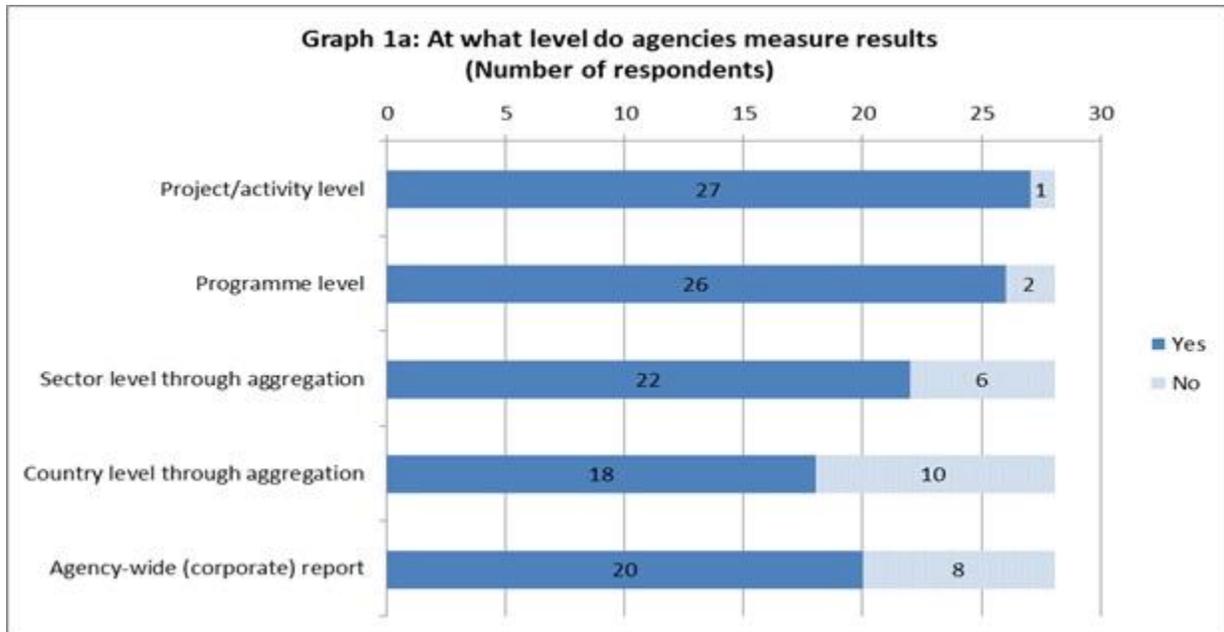
1.1   A more in-depth analysis on what DAC members focus on when tracking results is provided in Graph 1b. This looks at whether an organisation measures activities, outputs, outcomes or impacts. Survey findings indicate that at the project level 17 DAC members measure outputs, whilst at the programme level 20 measure outcomes. Further analysis indicates that out of a total of 28 respondents, nine measure both project and programme results at the outcome level (Canada, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, US Agency for international development (USAID), US Department of State, US Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), African Development Bank, World Bank).

1.2   In terms of sector level results, 11 agencies stated that they mostly tracked outcomes and seven indicated that they mostly measured outputs. For country level results, ten or 45% of respondents indicated that they tracked outcomes while five or 23% indicated that they measured outputs at this level. Two indicated that they tracked both sector and country results measurement at impact level (Ireland and USAID).

1.3   Survey results indicate that nearly three quarters of respondents provide an agency wide corporate results report (Graph 1a). Of these 20 agencies, nine tracked results in these

reports at outcome level (Graph 1b)[2]. Those who do not produce such a report provided supporting reasons for this (Austria, Belgium, European Commission (EC), Finland, Spain, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg and Norway). Some stated that as results measurements varied across countries and sectors, it was difficult to aggregate results information for corporate level reporting. Others indicated that attribution caused challenges when preparing corporate reports. One DAC member indicated that agency-wide reporting is envisaged in the future as part of on-going institutional reforms (EC).
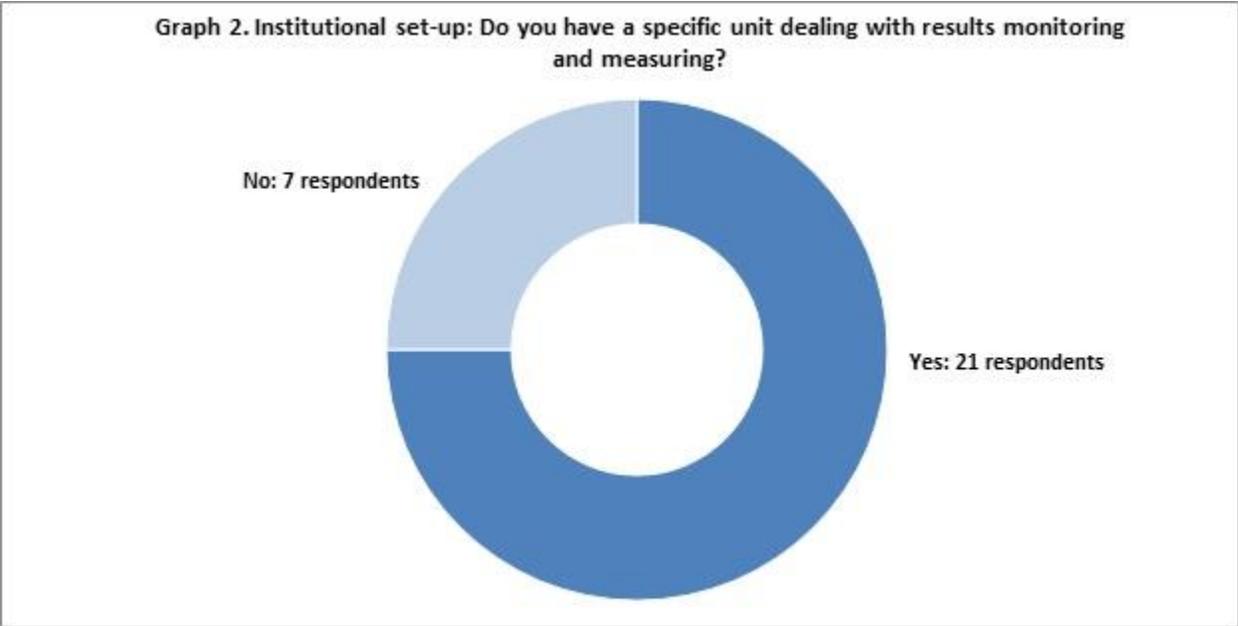

Graph 1b: Main Focus of Tracking (Number of respondents)

	Activity	Output	Outcome	Impact	Not Applicable	Total
Project/activity level	1	17	9	1		28
Programme level		6	20	2		28
Sector level through aggregation	1	7	11	2	4	25
Country level through aggregation		5	10	2	5	22
Agency-wide (corporate) report		6	9	2	4	21

2. Institutional set up for results management

Most agencies indicated that they have a specific unit dealing with results monitoring and measuring (see Graph 2). In most cases this unit is responsible for performance management, quality assurance and/or planning. Seven respondents indicated that they did not have such a unit and provided information on how results were measured and managed institutionally.

2.1   Of those who indicated in the survey that they did not have a unit specifically dealing with results monitoring and measuring, some stated that this function was the responsibility of thematic departments, regional departments, embassies, or implementing partners (The Netherlands, Finland, Ireland, Austria, and Italy). Others indicated that their evaluation department was responsible (Luxembourg, Spain).

2.2   One DAC member indicated that although it had a results focal point within its Policy and Planning Unit, and had numerous ''results resource people'' across the organisation, this responsibility lay mainly with programme managers (Ireland).

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[2] There is a discrepancy between Graph 1a and 1b in terms of the results report. 20 DAC members indicated that they had an agency wide corporate results report. Of these 20, 17 indicated the main focus of tracking and four indicated that this was not applicable to them.

Graph 2. Institutional set-up: Do you have a specific unit dealing with results monitoring and measuring?

No: 7 respondents

Yes: 21 respondents

3. Management and use of results information

The survey shows that DAC members have many uses for results information. Accountability to parliament and tracking progress were top priority uses for most, followed by external communication and decision making (Table 3).

3.1   A number of respondents felt that it was difficult to say how results information is used within their organisation. Those who provided reasons for this indicated that managing and using results information had many purposes within their agency and across all levels. For this reason, prioritizing them proved difficult (Switzerland, New Zealand, and Ireland).

3.2   A small number of countries mentioned that they used results information to report to intended beneficiaries at the country level (USAID, Belgium, Portugal and Luxembourg). Very few respondents chose policy development as a priority use for results information (Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Australia). Two DAC members indicated that they are still at an early stage in the implementation of their results management systems. Therefore it was too early to mention the current uses for results information (The Netherlands, Spain).

Table 3. Results information use (Number of respondents)

LEVEL	MOST CITED FIRST PRIORITY	MOST CITED SECOND PRIORITY
Agency/corporate	For accountability to parliament/legislature (11)	In external communication (11)
Country	To track progress (9)	For decision making (7)
Sector/programme	To track progress (13)	For decision making (8)
Project	To track progress (15)	For decision making (11)

4. Challenges encountered when using systems for results management

DAC members' assessment to challenges they are facing is fairly evenly spread. Most challenges are encountered ''sometimes'' or ''often'' by respondents. Top challenges are indicated below and grouped together according to their frequency:

  a) *Incomplete results frameworks due to the lack of availability and reliability of data - lack of baselines or targets, unclear results;*
     Difficulties in selecting appropriate indicators that measure results at the correct level;
     Difficulties in linking budget to results information.
  b) *Tracking outcomes;*
     Aggregating data in order to tell a consistent performance story;
     Difficulties in keeping results frameworks simple (while maintaining their usefulness as a management tool).
  c) *Results frameworks viewed by partners as a formal requirement and not used as a results management tool.*

The challenge least frequently encountered was difficulty in using information on results for accountability purposes (see graph 4)[3].

4.1   A number of agencies provided further information on challenges faced. One DAC member felt that although context analysis was undertaken at the inception phase of many programmes, it was not an on-going process during the programme implementation (Finland). Others stated that results information was not systematically linked with feedback loops to ensure corrective action during the programme cycle (World Bank), and often was not linked with decision making processes or budgets (Finland, Sweden).
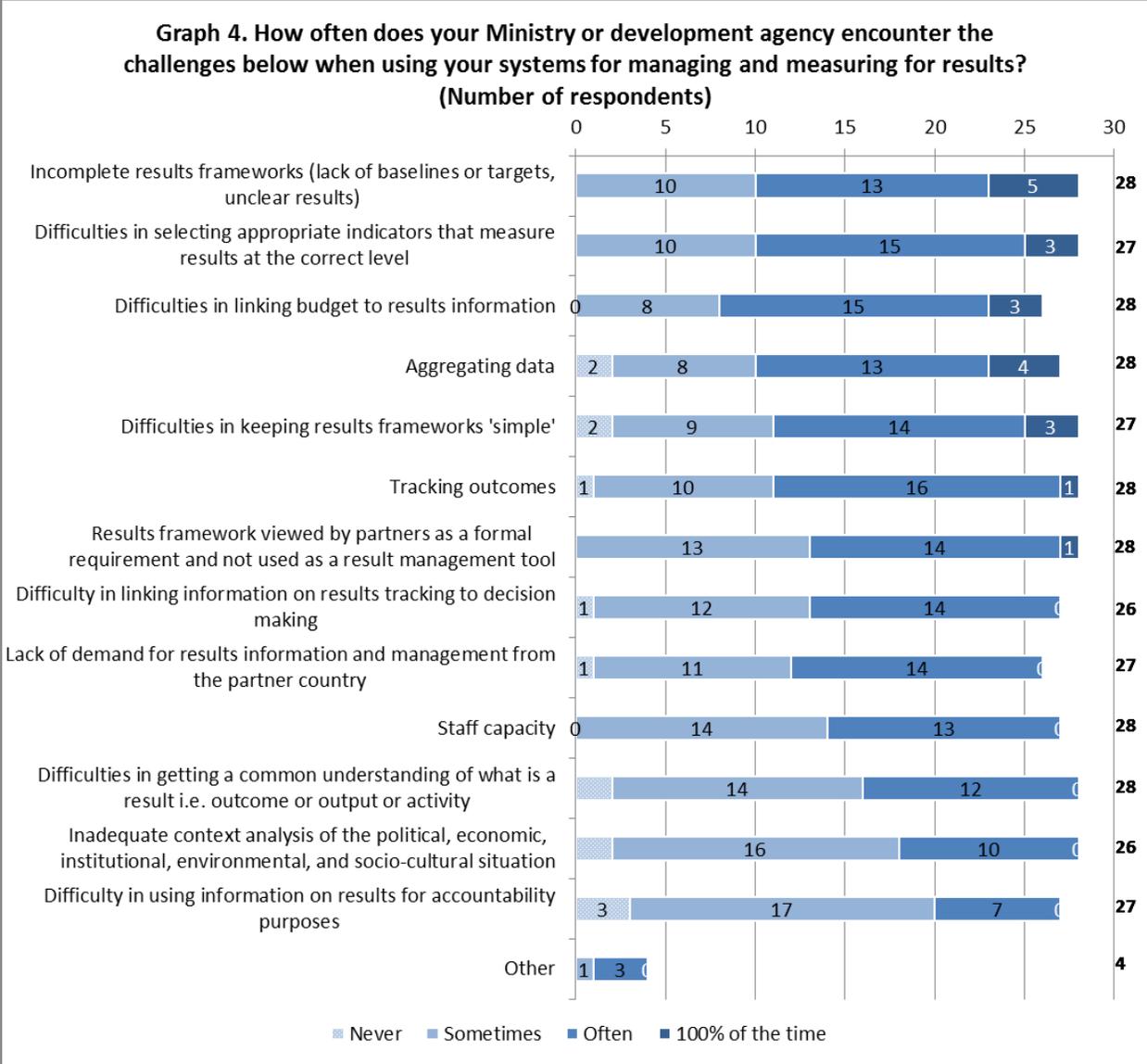
4.2   Some respondents felt that limited availability and reliability of data in partner countries presents a challenge (Portugal, The Netherlands, African Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank) when establishing baselines and targets, often leading to the creation of time and resource consuming parallel results systems. This lack of data was particularly evident at the household level and also in emerging priorities such as green growth.

4.3   Although staff capacity did not rank in the top challenges, a number of DAC members provided further details on this issue stating that capacity in terms of time, technical skills, competencies and operational requirements were obstacles in results management (Sweden, World Bank, MCC). Possible solutions were also offered such as the creation of better opportunities to learn about managing for results through communities of practice, and the development of incentives to create a results culture and motivate staff within institutions (World Bank, The Netherlands). In addition, one DAC member stated that ensuring results management capabilities of staff in embassies was important to engage better with other

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[3] Graph 4 represents how frequently respondents indicated they encountered the challenges mentioned in the survey. To calculate the top challenges met by respondents in results management, answers for those challenges encountered ''often'' or ''100% of the time'' were added together.

development actors in results work in partner countries (New Zealand). Another highlighted the need to ensure that partner countries lead the development of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems (EC).

Graph 4. How often does your Ministry or development agency encounter the challenges below when using your systems for managing and measuring for results? (Number of respondents)

Challenge	Never	Sometimes	Often	100% of the time	Total
Incomplete results frameworks (lack of baselines or targets, unclear results)		10	13	5	28
Difficulties in selecting appropriate indicators that measure results at the correct level		10	15	3	27
Difficulties in linking budget to results information	0	8	15	3	28
Aggregating data	2	8	13	4	28
Difficulties in keeping results frameworks 'simple'	2	9	14	3	27
Tracking outcomes	1	10	16	1	28
Results framework viewed by partners as a formal requirement and not used as a result management tool		13	14	1	28
Difficulty in linking information on results tracking to decision making	1	12	14	0	26
Lack of demand for results information and management from the partner country	1	11	14	0	27
Staff capacity	0	14	13	0	28
Difficulties in getting a common understanding of what is a result i.e. outcome or output or activity		14	12	0	28
Inadequate context analysis of the political, economic, institutional, environmental, and socio-cultural situation		16	10	0	26
Difficulty in using information on results for accountability purposes	3	17	7	0	27
Other	1	3	0		4

4.4 Finally attribution was mentioned as a challenge by a number of agencies (USAID, African Development Bank, Spain) who indicated that it is difficult to make explicit the causative pathways that lead to results and explain the attribution or contribution of ODA to development results in terms of outcomes and impact.

4.5 It is worth noting that a small number of DAC members never encounter challenges in some results management areas where others are experiencing difficulties. The areas that were less challenging for some DAC members were as follows:

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- Difficulties in getting a common understanding of what is a result (UK, US Dept. of State);
- Difficulties in keeping results frameworks simple (UK, Germany);
- Inadequate context analysis of the political, economic, institutional, environmental, and socio-cultural situation (Germany, World Bank);
- Difficulty in linking information on results tracking to decision making (UK);
- Difficulty in using information on results for accountability purposes (Australia, Norway, World Bank).

5. Approaches taken to support partner country results systems

All DAC members provide support to partner countries in some way. According to the questionnaire responses, the top three approaches are:
  a) *Using partner country results systems for decision making or programming;*
  b) *Support initiatives or systems which promote quality data;*
  c) *Support partner country capacity to manage country result systems effectively.*

The least cited approach is finding champions in partner government for results systems and reducing political barriers - only three respondents indicating that they use this approach often (see Graph 5).

Graph 5. How often do you use the following approaches to support partner country results systems? (Weighted average)
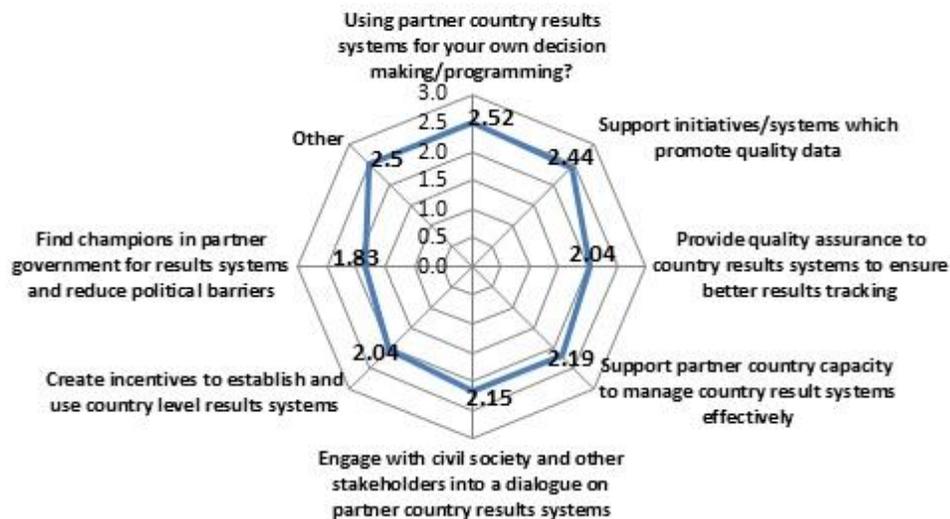
5.1   Several DAC members provided examples of how they support partner countries. One agency indicated that it supports building M&E capacity in its partner agencies by providing

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resources to engage dedicated M&E staff and collect data (MCC). Another stated that it involves its partners in the planning and periodic assessments of results in country strategies in order to share results management knowledge and practice, and foster partnership and transparency with partners (Switzerland). One agency indicated that it provides statistical capacity building to partner countries through a Community of Practice (AfCoP) (African Development Bank).
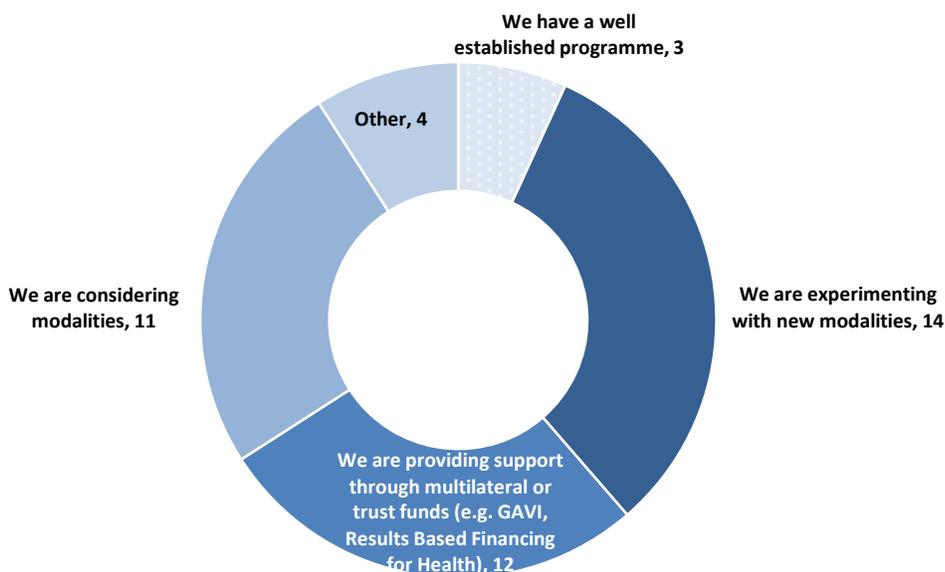
5.2   Some agencies felt that it was difficult to say how often they used a particular approach to support partner country results systems. This was mainly due to the fact that approaches taken to support partner country results systems were not systematically tracked in terms of how often they were employed by staff, or were not managed coherently across the agency.

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6. Results based financing modalities

Only three DAC members indicated that they have well established programmes (USAID, World Bank, EC). However, half of those who took part in the survey stated that they are experimenting with modalities or are providing support through multilateral or trust funds, and 11 indicated that they are considering new modalities (see graph 6). This shows a growing interest in this area.

6.1   Of those experimenting with new modalities, DAC members indicated that they have results based aid or cash on delivery projects in several countries (UK), or have programmes which focus on this modality (DANIDA's B-to-B programme or DANIDA's Business Partnership Programme). Others indicated that they supported the global partnership on output based aid (Australia), or are at early stages of designing and implementing results based service delivery (New Zealand).
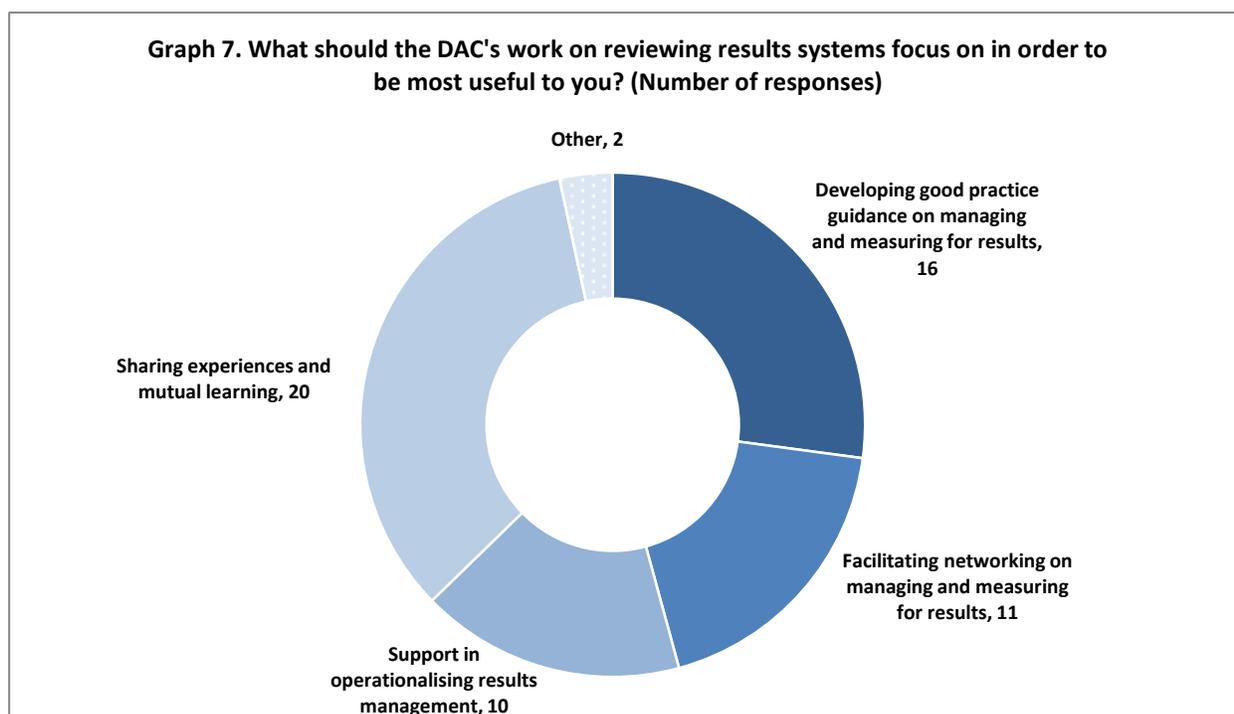

Graph 6. What is your agency's current experience using results based financing modalities? (number of responses)

- We have a well established programme, 3
- Other, 4
- We are considering modalities, 11
- We are experimenting with new modalities, 14
- We are providing support through multilateral or trust funds (e.g. GAVI, Results Based Financing for Health), 12

Most agencies are of the opinion that the DAC's work on reviewing results systems should focus on sharing experiences and mutual learning (20). Many also felt that the DAC should focus on developing good practice guidance on managing and measuring for results. Moreover 11 members suggested that the DAC should facilitate networking on results management and ten stated that it should support the operationalisation of results management (see Graph 7).

7.1   Agencies chose several possible areas of support for the DAC's future work in results management. Survey findings indicate that although much information exists in this area, not enough is being done to share this experience and learn from others. In addition the survey shows that although some DAC members are making headway in linking results to budgets, this remains a challenging area for most, and members suggested sharing workable approaches to address this issue.

Graph 7. What should the DAC's work on reviewing results systems focus on in order to be most useful to you? (Number of responses)

- Other, 2
- Developing good practice guidance on managing and measuring for results, 16
- Facilitating networking on managing and measuring for results, 11
- Support in operationalising results management, 10
- Sharing experiences and mutual learning, 20

7.2   Providing support to partner country governments was also recommended with a focus on improving their results systems and operations (MCC) and improving data availability and reliability based on country owned statistics (The Netherlands). Support to develop common indicators which can be measured through county-owned monitoring systems was also suggested (The Netherlands, Canada). One agency suggested that the DAC could champion a debate to define standards for country M&E systems and results reporting (Inter-American Development Bank).