

Mutual Accountability through Results: Supporting partner countries' development goals and results frameworks

*Workshop, co-hosted by the EU and the OECD
9-10 February 2017, EU Thon Hotel, Brussels*

KEY MESSAGES

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Prepared by the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate

The workshop

The workshop agenda can be found [here](#). The 90 participants represented 26 DAC members, observers and participants, including 16 EU Member States; 9 representatives of partner countries and organisations; 4 other providers of development co-operation; 7 think-tanks; the GPEDC; as well as the European Commission and the OECD. The workshop addressed four themes:

1. *Country focus*: how can the *results frameworks of providers and country partners* best be linked, under the leadership of partners?
2. *Mutual accountability*: what roles do development results play for accountability, communication, direction and learning of *partners, providers and other stakeholders*?
3. *Common goals and results*: how can we assess development co-operation's contributions to development results, notably within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
4. *Capacity-building for better results frameworks*: how can partner countries improve their results frameworks, and what tools are effective in capacity-building?

The discussions, which switched between brief plenary panels and extensive dialogues around nine tables, confirmed the need for and existence of a "results community" among providers as well as the essence of results-focused interactions with partners in development co-operation.

Key take-away messages under each theme

Country focus: Linking and aligning the results frameworks of providers and country partners

1. Over the past year, most providers and partners present at the workshop have come far in establishing results frameworks that, to varying degrees, reference or incorporate the SDGs and the SDG targets and indicators. This has been done by individual providers and partners in accordance with their respective goals and priorities. Consequently, there are multiple, overlapping results frameworks in each partner country. The evolving results frameworks of national authorities – in the form of visions, strategies and sector plans and budgets – interact with the corporate and country-specific results frameworks of a multitude of providers.
2. Bilateral, government-to-government development co-operation constitutes a declining share of development co-operation, which increasingly is delivered by a multitude of partnerships at

multiple levels. This challenges the commitment to using country-led results frameworks. Providers and partners need better evidence and exchange of experience to optimize the reference to SDG targets and indicators in the development results frameworks at country level.

3. The experience gained so far suggests that an effective way to align results frameworks is for providers and partners to agree on the high-level goals and intended results of their development partnerships, ensuring that these are truly inclusive and reflect the priorities of partner governments. This process is country-led, participatory, based on dialogue and trust – and is the essence of the country-led results frameworks, to which the parties have committed, most recently at the 2nd High-level Meeting on Effective Development Co-operation in Nairobi, December 2016. This process is challenged if and when providers operate in accordance with provider-specific global targets for their development co-operation.
4. On the partner side, the precondition for country-led results frameworks is an integrated approach to planning, budgeting, implementation, results monitoring and evaluation, based on data of adequate quality and coverage. Realistic public financial management is a part of good governance, without which country-led results frameworks may be paper tigers. The 2016 Monitoring Report of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation used two indicators on country results frameworks and mutual accountability, which assess the presence of planning instruments, not their quality. Better evidence, which also takes into account the unique context of fragile states, is needed on the quality and use of country-led results frameworks for learning and decision making.

Mutual accountability through development results at country level

5. The universal commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the emphasis on partnerships as the primary means of development co-operation could lead to the suggestion that *mutual* accountability is more about *joint* accountability for a higher cause. However, clarity about the different roles of partners and providers is a precondition for development co-operation to lead to results, and the achievement of development results is the fundamental sign of accountability more broadly. Pursuing mutual accountability through results is a way to recognise the different roles, while working for the same goals.
6. There is a need to minimise the risks of a two-track system in the generation and use of results information: Accountability and communication for politicians and provider-specific purposes on one hand; and implementation and partnerships as a management challenge for development professionals on the other. The results staff of some providers and partners seems to be caught between these two tracks, which have different purposes and audiences. While the country level mechanisms of mutual accountability and dialogue between partners and providers are a way to generate agreement on partnership goals, they need to emphasize results in the form of real change on the ground. Mutual accountability is about the agreed *what* (and the agreed *what-not*) of development co-operation results.
7. The results frameworks of many providers comprise several levels, from development change to organisational and operational performance. The frameworks need to bridge the gap between change and performance in order to achieve and demonstrate mutual accountability through results. This is a dimension of the risks of the two-track system. If results are about performance and outputs, they may be quantifiable and easier to communicate, but they fail to give direction and ultimate accountability. If results are primarily about impact, they may lead to the change we want, but they may ignore the costs and undermine efficiency. Achieving results on the ground means that partners and providers are accountable for the same goals.

8. Citizen's demands for results information vary in provider and partner countries. For some providers, the communication of results to domestic audiences tends to dominate the use of results information and the design of results frameworks. Too often, the ultimate beneficiaries are not party to the results dialogue. Results communication may need a clearer focus on goal achievement in order to satisfy the demand at both ends of the results chain – from provision to impact. This requires review of the combination of data and stories needed for communication.

Common goals and results – Development co-operation's contributions to the 2030 Agenda

9. Aligning around the tangible and concrete development goals and targets of partner countries requires a commonality of interests in the goals to be achieved. This is typically achieved through bilateral agreements between providers and partners. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a *complementary* solution and a *common narrative*. The 17 SDGs and their 169 targets offer an integrated approach for co-operation to achieve sustainable development results. They map out goals to be achieved, changes to be pursued, and impact to be sustained. In a results context, many of the 169 SDG targets are particularly relevant.
10. Development results are about demonstrable change across economic, social, environmental and political dimensions. The SDG targets are common goals for real life outcomes and change. The 2030 Agenda expresses our common aspirations with respect to development change. Progress on the SDGs, and especially their targets, reflects achievement of development results, to which international development co-operation is contributing. The SDG targets and indicators can establish direct, useful links between providers' and partners' goals and results frameworks.
11. Integrating SDG targets into results frameworks for development and development co-operation must be done at country level. It must reflect the priorities set by national and local authorities and their expectations on the role of development co-operation. While we can understand the SDGs and SDG targets as development results, because they deal with change to be achieved by 2030, we need to explore further whether and how the SDG targets are also development co-operation results. This requires case-studies and analyses of the relevance and contribution of ODA and other forms of development co-operation to progress on the SDG targets, as prioritised by partner governments and/or regional agreements (e.g. Agenda 2063 for Africa).
12. The setting of national priorities, implementation and the monitoring of results must be inclusive; implementation of development co-operation involves multi-stakeholder partnerships (including civil society, private sector and foundations), going beyond bilateral, state-to-state co-operation. Updating the decades-old model of development co-operation is facilitated by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With the SDGs, the SDG targets and the principle of leaving no one behind, all parties have a common reference framework for goals and results monitoring.

Capacity-building for results-based management and better results frameworks at country level

13. Investments are needed in national statistical systems (including administrative data), not just in targeted data generation. Results-based management requires systems that meet the demand for and use of data. Putting more emphasis on results-based implementation and development co-operation requires agreement on what data are to be used and therefore collected on a long-term basis. Country-led results frameworks are part of the core of national governance, to which providers contribute development co-operation. Harmonisation is needed of provider support to statistical capacity-building. Cost-effectiveness and savings are possible with agreement by all parties to focus on the SDG targets prioritised by national authorities.

14. Results delivery remains a special challenge in fragile contexts, because of limited existing capacity, the typical need for urgent development and humanitarian efforts, the lack of inclusiveness at country level and the involvement of non-aid types of engagement. There is a need to balance efficiency, transparency and accountability in fragile contexts. More evidence is needed on the design and use of providers' and partners' results frameworks in these situations.

Next steps

At and after the workshop, 10-15 suggestions were made on joint activities and further work needed by the Results Community. These have been combined into four projects to be supported by the DCD Results Team over the next six months:

1. ***SDG-related results programming by providers and partners at country level***

More analysis is needed of the links between the 2030 Agenda and the results frameworks of providers and partners, based on a few country case-studies, including of fragile contexts. This will provide an overview of the actual use of SDGs, SDG targets and SDG indicators in the goals and results frameworks of providers and partners at country level. It will also be used to pursue alternatives to the pilot analysis of measuring "distance to the 2030 targets".

2. ***Management for development results***

Case-studies of seven providers' results frameworks and MfDR approaches will be produced. Dissemination will involve sharing good practices and peer learning opportunities for new DAC members / emerging providers on building results frameworks from projects up. The analysis may also examine different approaches to enhance transparency in results reporting, e.g. through IATI, as advocated by some providers.

3. ***Developing the Results Community***

Online sharing of results experience and information will be improved through a new website. A contribution will be made to the **Development Co-operation Report 2017** on data-driven results. Two **workshops for the Results Community** will be organized in 2017; the Brussels workshop (9-10 February), will be followed by a second workshop in September-October.

4. ***Results communication***

Sharing good practice in communication of development results can include the commitment to **Leave no one behind**. Collaborating with the DevComs network, the focus will be on the results information needed when communicating with ultimate beneficiaries, decision-makers in partner and provider countries, and domestic constituencies in provider countries. The data and narratives needed to communicate results under the 2030 Agenda are key.

To lead the work on these projects, interested DAC members and providers are invited to take part in two informal *task teams*, covering the 1st and 4th projects, respectively. Progress on this work should feed into the next workshop of the Results Community, which may address some of the following themes:

- A shared vision for the Results Community in the context of Agenda 2030
- Results frameworks in and for fragile contexts, including engagements beyond development
- Leave no one behind: Implications for results data, monitoring and communication
- Extending results frameworks beyond aid, to incorporate multi-stakeholder partnerships
- Engaging with partners' finance ministries for strengthening results-based management and securing linkages between budgeting and M&E processes
- Joint Programming: The experience of the EU and partner countries in the use of joint results frameworks