

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP



**EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
PARIS DECLARATION**

BRIEF SUMMARY OF KEY MESSAGES

**OPERATIONS EVALUATION DEPARTMENT
(OPEV)**

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Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration

Brief Summary of Key Messages

Introduction

An independent evaluation of progress in the implementation of the Paris Declaration was commissioned through the Evaluation Network of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, and the evaluation results will be presented in September at the High Level Forum meeting in Accra. The Synthesis Report has now been published, and the key findings and lessons are summarised below. The report draws on 19 evaluation reports on individual agencies and developing countries, including three in Africa: Senegal, South Africa and Uganda.

Progress on the Five Commitments

1. **Ownership.** Of central importance but still elusive to define and measure. In practice, ownership remains heavily weighted in favour of central government players. It needs to be approached not as an absolute condition, but as a process or a continuum.
2. **Alignment.** Highly uneven implementation of the various components. Progress is more visible in aligning aid strategies with national priorities; less so in aligning aid allocations, using and building country systems, reducing parallel Project Implementation Units and coordinating support to strengthen capacity. Among bilateral donors, there is only sparse evidence of improvements in aid predictability and untying.
3. **Harmonisation.** No evidence of backsliding on harmonisation but nor of any overall trend toward progress, except for potential seen in the European Union Code of Conduct. Confidence and trust in others' systems need to be developed. Some donors first have to overcome "harmonisation" problems within their own systems. Harmonisation may increasingly be taking a back seat to the push for greater alignment with country systems.
4. **Managing for development results.** Beyond the monitoring indicator, the evaluations also re-focus attention on the Declaration's other concerns: what donors need to do to gear their own systems and their active support to more effective country systems.
5. **Mutual accountability.** While all see this as a complex puzzle and falling short so far, it is revealing to go back to the full package of mutual commitments in the Declaration. More pieces of the solution are actually at hand than is generally assumed.

Overall conclusions and lessons

1. **Context is key.** This is an early evaluation. Yet the Declaration was not the starting point, but a key watershed in formalizing and refocusing efforts in an international plan of action with unprecedented breadth of support. The context is dynamic - political changes and pressures affect implementation. A growing influence is the effect of non-aid resource flows and growing aid (private and official) falling outside the Paris Declaration frameworks
2. **The Paris Declaration is a political agenda for action, not just a technical agreement.** Real issues of power and political economy come into play, in many cases requiring political solutions.
3. **It is a shared agenda, with some divergences.** This evaluation reveals only a few consistent differences between the perspectives of country and donor representatives.
4. **Strengthening capacity and trust in country systems is a major issue,** although the concern may at least in part be the result of outdated perceptions among some donors.
5. **Expectations and uses of the Declaration differ.** Views of the Declaration vary from it being a “statement of intent” all the way to it being a set of “non-negotiable decrees.” How to deal with different contexts is an unresolved issue.
6. **The appropriate uses and limits of the monitoring indicators need to be more clearly recognized.** The evaluations show that misunderstanding of the role and place of the Survey and its indicators has had serious unintended effects in narrowing the focus of attention, debate, and perhaps action to a limited set of measures.
7. **There are important synergies and some tensions between commitments.** Some of the donors are perceived to be emphasizing managing for results, selected aspects of mutual accountability, and harmonisation, while partner countries tend to be most concerned with strengthening alignment and ownership.
8. **The challenges of transition and transaction costs in implementation need to be tackled.** All of the donor evaluations record that these changes are resulting in difficult transitional adjustments and increased transaction costs in managing their aid programs. Partner countries’ evaluations are not yet clear about the burden of the new demands of strategic leadership being placed on them. Overall, the evaluations do not yet yield a clear view as to whether the net transaction costs of aid will ultimately be reduced from the pre-2005 situation as originally anticipated, or for whom.

Are the necessary commitment, capacities and incentives in place?

All of the individual evaluations assessed the “enabling conditions” - commitment, capacities and incentives - available in countries and agencies to support successful implementation of the Paris Declaration. This clarifies the “whys” and “hows” of performance. The variations in performance – and of the supporting commitment, capacities and incentives in different countries and especially agencies – are extremely wide. A few development agencies are now internalising effective aid as their “raison d’etre” and the Paris Declaration is recognised a constant guide to how they organize and do their work.

Assessments of the Declaration as a Tool

The Declaration is still really clear only to those stakeholders both within donor agencies and within countries working with it directly.

Partner Countries and many donors raised concerns about the clarity, validity and purpose of some of the indicators being used to monitor implementation.

Partner Countries challenged the perceived notion that “one-size-fits-all”. While the Declaration has relevance within its particular sphere of aid effectiveness, it is far from being seen as a panacea for many countries’ main development concerns.

Key Lessons

- 1. To counter bureaucratization and “aid effectiveness fatigue”, concrete measures are needed to re-energize and sustain high-level political engagement in the aid effectiveness reforms**, both in countries and in development partner systems. Faster movement from rhetoric to action by both partner governments and donors is now crucial to retaining the Declaration’s credibility.
- 2. Successful implementation is much more likely in countries where understanding and involvement are extended beyond narrow circles of specialists**, as has been shown in some promising advances in involving legislatures and civil society in both partner and donor countries. Within many countries, regional and local levels of government are also increasingly important actors and must be fully involved.
- 3. Other factors for successful implementation in countries often include the role of “champions” who ensure that the necessary capacity is deployed, and lead the vital drive to align aid with the country’s budgetary and accountability systems. Among donors, the changes in regulations and practices to delegate greater authority and capacity to field offices have been the most important enabling conditions for successful implementation.**

4. **Strengthening both the actual capacities of partner country systems to manage aid effectively, and recognizing and using those capacities where they already exist, are now key requirements for advancing the implementation of the reforms.**
5. **The integrated, balanced and reciprocal character of the full package of Paris Declaration commitments needs to be strongly re-affirmed and applied, and the Monitoring Survey and indicators placed in their proper perspective as part of the overall agenda.**
6. **To offset the image of the Declaration as a “one size fits all” prescription for rigid compliance, there is a need to reiterate and demonstrate that its guidance can and should be adapted to particular country circumstances, while also clarifying the features to be maintained in common.**

TESTING THE PARIS DECLARATION: THE PHASE ONE EVALUATION OF IMPLEMENTATION

Adapted from presentation by

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A joint evaluation

- *partner countries and donors develop evaluation framework jointly*
- *country level evaluations led by partner countries and managed in-country*
- *partner countries participate in evaluation of development partners*
- *joint reference group and overall management*

Country level evaluations

- *the utility of the Paris Declaration itself as a tool for aid effectiveness;*
- *the change of donors' behaviour in terms of alignment of their systems and procedures to implement the PD commitments;*
- *the change of partner behaviour, with ownership as the key entry-point;*

Bangladesh ,Bolivia, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Viet Nam

Donor evaluations

- *level of leadership and commitment as expressed in policies and strategies;*
- *development of capacities as expressed in guidelines, procedures, staff training, resources and delegation of authority (to field level);*
- *conducive incentive systems: RBM, HRD.*

AsDB, Australia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxemburg, Netherlands, New Zealand, UK, UNDP/UNEG

Key Findings and Lessons

- *context is key*
- *a political agenda for action, not just technical*
- *a shared agenda, with some divergences*
- *synergies and some tensions between commitments.*
- *expectations and uses of the declaration differ*
- *capacity and trust in country systems is a major issue*
- *clarify the uses and limits of the monitoring indicators*
- *transition and transaction costs need to be tackled*

Context is key

- *early evaluation, limitations for generalization*
- *the Declaration not the starting point, but a key turning-point*
- *context is dynamic - political changes and pressures affect*
- *growing influence of non-aid resource flows and growing aid (private and official) outside the PD frameworks*

It is a political agenda for action, not just technical

To make these changes, real issues of power and political economy come into play, often requiring political solutions.

- *Lesson 1: to counter bureaucratization and “aid effectiveness fatigue”, concrete measures are needed to re-energize and sustain high-level political engagement in the aid effectiveness reforms*
- *Lesson 2: successful implementation is much more likely in countries where understanding and involvement are extended beyond narrow circles of specialists*

Political priorities for Donors

Prepare publics and adapt legislation and regulations to:

- *put less emphasis on visibility for national efforts and tying;*
- *accept and manage risks in relying on country and other donor systems*
- *delegate greater decision-making power and capacity to in-country staff*
- *assure more predictable aid flows*
- *find constructive ways to manage political disputes with partners*

It is a shared agenda, with some divergences

Few consistent differences between the country and donor perspectives

Lesson 3: key success factors include:

- *in countries, the role of “champions” who ensure the necessary capacity, and lead the drive to align aid with the country’s budgetary and accountability systems.*
- *among donors, changes in regulations and practices to delegate greater authority and capacity to field offices have been the most important enabling conditions for successful implementation*

Synergies and some tensions between commitments

- *some donors are seen to emphasize managing for results, selected aspects of mutual accountability, and harmonisation*
- *partner countries tend to be most concerned with strengthening alignment and ownership*
- *Wherever it can, harmonisation should follow alignment and ownership*

Expectations and uses of the Declaration differ

What level of direction to expect from the declaration? Views vary from it being a “statement of intent” all the way to a set of “non-negotiable decrees.” How to deal with different contexts is unresolved

- *Lesson 6: to offset the image of the declaration as a “one size fits all” prescription for rigid compliance, there is a need to reiterate and demonstrate that its guidance can and should be adapted to particular country circumstances, while also clarifying the features to be maintained in common.*

Capacity and trust in country systems is crucial

- *Lesson 4: strengthening the capacities of partner country systems to manage aid effectively, and recognizing and using those capacities where they already exist, are now crucial requirements*

For their part, most partner countries need stronger political engagement to:

- *assert their leadership in aid alignment, coordination and harmonisation, accepting the risks and managing the effects in their relations with donors*
- *share responsibility for development and aid more widely between different parts and levels of government, as well as with legislatures, civil society and the private sector, and citizens at large*

Clarify the uses and limits of the monitoring indicators

Monitoring is a vital part of Paris but its role and limits are misunderstood, with serious unintended effects in narrowing the focus of attention, debate, and perhaps action to a limited set of measures

- *Lesson 5: the integrated, balanced and reciprocal character of the full package of Declaration commitments needs to be strongly re-affirmed and applied, and the Monitoring Survey and indicators placed in their proper perspective as part of the overall agenda*

Transition and transaction costs need to be tackled

- *donor evaluations record difficult transitional adjustments and increased transaction costs. donors must provide and adjust for these demands, and support partner countries to make their own adjustments. modify the expectations and pace of change if necessary.*
- *partner countries' evaluations are not yet clear about the burden of the new demands of strategic leadership being placed on them.*
- *overall no clear view yet whether the net transaction costs of aid will ultimately be reduced from the pre-2005 situation as originally anticipated, or for whom (phase 2 research)*

Progress Report on the Five Commitments

- *ownership. central but still elusive. see as a process or a continuum*
- *alignment. highly uneven implementation of the various components*
- *harmonisation. increasingly taking a back seat to the push for greater alignment with country systems*
- *managing for development results. “good enough” systems are needed, and donors need to adapt theirs.*
- *mutual accountability more pieces of the solution are actually at hand than is generally assumed*

Recommendations to partner country authorities

- *in 2008 detail steps they will take to strengthen their leadership of aid relationships up to 2010*
- *put in place a continuing transparent mechanism, ideally anchored in the legislature, for political monitoring and public participation around aid management and reform*
- *give clear guidance to donors on priorities for capacity-strengthening assistance*
- *by 2010 have “good enough” systems of managing for results for their own planning, management and accountability needs, and a sufficient basis for harnessing donors’ contributions*

Recommendations to donor authorities

- *in 2008 update legislatures and publics on progress to date & the need and plans for further concrete changes before 2010*
- *in 2008 announce further detailed plans to delegate by 2010 sufficient decision-making authority, appropriately skilled staff and other resources to field offices*

- *detail concrete planned steps to improve, by 2010 at the latest, the timeliness, completeness and accuracy of their reporting and projections for aid flows. provide for multi-year allocations, commitments, or firm projections*
- *provide budgets, staffing and training up to 2010 to help their own programmes adjust for the transitional and new demands and transaction costs and learning needs*
- *allocate special resources (budgets and coordinated technical assistance) to support and reinforce countries' prioritized efforts to strengthen their own capacities to implement more effective cooperation*

Recommendations to organizers of the Phase Two evaluation

- *pursue the results and dilemmas found during Phase One*
- *address squarely the question of "aid effectiveness" assessing whether aid is contributing to better development outcomes and impacts (development effectiveness)*
- *rely on representative country evaluations and apply a consistent core methodology*
- *commission targeted research in advance on key topics (e.g. transaction costs, capacity strengthening strategies, non-DAC aid)*