



KNOWLEDGE. CAPACITY BUILDING. NETWORKING

PARIS DECLARATION EVALUATION

IDEAS/AFREA ON-LINE CONFERENCE

http://cf.groups.yahoo.com/group/Paris_Declaration_Evaluation/

Anthology of Contributions

Edited by Daniel Svoboda, Vice-President, IDEAS

IDEAS - International Development Evaluation Association

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Description

The Paris Declaration represents a key commitment made by the Ministers of developed and developing countries responsible for promoting development and Heads of multilateral and bilateral development institutions.

The declaration, which is aligned with the Monterey consensus, is however an additional practical oriented step towards the five core principles guiding human security and development.

1 OWNERSHIP; 2 ALIGNMENT; 3 HARMONISATION; 4 MANAGING FOR RESULTS; 5 MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY.

The monitoring and evaluation of the Paris Declaration is an integral part of the declaration itself and raise a number of challenges and opportunities. Thus the purpose of the discussion group is to discuss these challenges and opportunities encountered by the evaluation practitioners interested and/or involved in assessing the Paris declaration. It is also to identify good practices, methods and tools useful in evaluating the Paris Declaration.

The discussion shall last a month, starting April 12, 2010 and ending May 7, 2010. The group will continue to exist, pending the demand and interest of the participants. Each week will be focusing on a specific theme with specific sub questions. The themes are:

Week 1: Evaluation Quality

Week 2: Challenges and opportunities

Week 3: Appropriate tools and methods

Week 4: Transaction costs and country systems

Project Team:

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French & English: Denis Jobin

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The following report includes all contributions to the on-line conference focused on issues related to evaluations of the Paris Declaration (PD) and Accra Agenda for Action (AAA). The text was edited only from format and language points of view. The moderator of the conference and the editor did not interfere into the content - professional opinions of individual authors of the contributions. The original contributions are available at http://cf.groups.yahoo.com/group/Paris_Declaration_Evaluation/.

The conference took place between April 12, 2010 and May 20, 2010.

Denis Jobin, 12.4.2010

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to launch the first week of discussion by asking the following questions, as a start up. Please note that while discussions will mainly be in English, they are translated here for your information.

So, based on your experience and in your view:

Q1 - How can evaluators ensure reliable findings and applicable lessons learned?

- a. What are the challenges in ensuring the quality of PD evaluation, within and across Country Evaluation Teams?***
- b. What are the challenges for using the findings and lessons learned?***

Hellmut Eggers, 13.4.2010

Dear Denis!

Thanks for your message! Here is my reaction:

Q1 a.: The main challenge is not the application of the indicators that are very well specified in the PD. These indicators will allow a reliable evaluation of progress made towards the objectives as contained in the PD as well as in the AAA. The main challenge is NOT in assessing what IS but in what is NOT contained in the PD (and the AAA), and the importance of such gaps for the effectiveness (or rather the all too often observable ineffectiveness...) of International Development Cooperation. Clearly, an evaluation of the PD will have to specify those criteria that are both: (a) missing and yet (b) vital for such effectiveness.

The most important of these gaps is, in my view, the absence of some basic indications as to the nature and the content of the "assessment frameworks" (i.e. PD point 19). Such frameworks (to be agreed between partner countries and donors) should be concentrating on the overall objective that ALL of the PD objectives should help to achieve: the creation of sustainable benefits for the target groups of development interventions: projects, programs and policies. This objective can and should command general agreement among all stakeholders and it seems perfectly possible, therefore, to rally agreement of all concerned on a general grid of criteria to be applied in order to create such benefits. The assessment frameworks should take the form of such grids. Simply to underline the need for their establishment reminds me of a newspaper "headline" without the ensuing article. Such "grid" should be spelled out in an extra point and then referred to notably under points 19; 43; 45; 46 of the PD; under PD Indicator 11; and under points 10; 13 c); 14 a); and 23 of the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA).

Q1 b.: The main challenge for using the findings and lessons learned has, again to do with the absence of a more substantive description of the "assessment frameworks", in the form of a general grid, a "basic framework", from which all the more specific ones (for countries, regions, sectors etc...) are derived. The problem of systematic operational feedback of lessons learned by evaluations into applied practice, an unsolved problem up to the present, will only be solved if Planning and Evaluation of Development Interventions are "amalgamated" and serve the single purpose of creating sustainable benefits for their target groups. Only then will the Terms of Reference for planning and evaluation documents evolve along parallel lines (the essential difference being that planning looks forward to the future and evaluation backwards towards the past); planning being "affirmative", evaluation being "inquisitive", taking nothing for granted.

If orientations spelled out under Q1 a. and b. above are followed, then evaluators (and planners, I should like to add) will be well on their way towards arriving at "reliable findings and applicable lessons learned", as well as their actual application. The "basic" or "master assessment framework" should be periodically reviewed and amply commented. This way of proceeding will allow to incorporate all of the most important general evaluation lessons for ensuring development effectiveness as they are taught by experience; while each specific development intervention: projects, programs and policies, in given countries/regions that are conceived on that basis, will be able to pick up all of the specifics pertaining to each - and no other - given case. The system will thus allow (a) to accumulate and spell out, ever more comprehensively, general experience while simultaneously (b) constantly improving planners' and evaluators' capacities to recognize and take into account the specifics of each individual intervention.

The failure of the PD and the AAA to present the nature of the “assessment frameworks” in light of the above considerations constitutes, in my view, their most important gap (that their evaluation should, however, allow to fill).

I hope, dear Denis, that these observations are useful for all that take part in this debate and also for the improvement of development intervention effectiveness (no matter, by the way, whether co-financed or not).

Kind regards! Hellmut

Kerry Abbott, 13.4.2010

I think the problem is more elementary than even the points Hellmut makes.

As an evaluator I learn a lot from the evaluation, as do the parties involved in the evaluation--I design it that way. However, there is no mechanism for implementing lessons learned--if they can be agreed. A lot of the failings relate to agency ambition: the primary aim of chasing after projects with no sustainability because that money will increase your agency profile, relying on short-term staff instead of building sectoral expertise within the agency that stays on to incorporate lessons learned into future programmes, no aim to build a theory of intervention that leads to improvements in method--each project is an ad hoc effort--etc.

If these are the shortcomings linked to the culture of international agencies, countries have their own capacity issues, linked mostly to trying to appear to accommodate the conditions of donors, to receive continued funding. Even if international agencies are meant to follow the lead of the country strategy, they push their own values and themes, get the country to endorse them in a document, and then hold that up as the rationale for them to pursue their own priorities. That makes the PD a bit of a device to circumvent.

A more useful method would be to view the country development strategy and the values therein as an indicator of their level of development and immediate needs. Over time, those needs and priorities will change, reflecting a change in capacity and values.

Charles Orina, 14.4.2010

Hi Denis,

Here below are my views:

Q1- How can evaluators ensure reliable findings and applicable lessons learned?

The challenges in ensuring the quality of PD evaluation, within and across Country Evaluation Teams

To a large extent, the quality of an evaluation usually depends on, a) the competence of the evaluators, b) scope and clarity on what is to be evaluated and c) the availability and quality of data. Whereas availability of (or access to) necessary competences are not a major problem in many countries any more, the issues under b) and c) above still remain serious challenges to PD in partner countries. Evaluators would therefore need to ensure that there is clear and mutually agreed scope of the evaluation, taking into account the respective needs and expectations of the donors and developing countries involved. Secondly they will need to be creative in designing data collection methods that take into account the peculiarities within countries.

Across Country Evaluations would be a complex undertaking because data collection systems are weak or nonexistent. In many countries such systems are currently being established as part of the national monitoring and evaluation systems which are being developed and are therefore unlikely to provide reliable data for the PD.

Challenges for using the findings and lessons learned

Most of the aid recipients have been undertaking major reforms in governance, financial management, and budgeting among other aspects, some of which predate the PD. A major difficulty in PD evaluations would therefore be to isolate changes in the effectiveness of aid in a given country which would be attributed to the PD commitments from those changes which have arisen from reform interventions that have been under implementation.

Using lessons learned would be quite limited given the relatively short period of implementing the PD programmes as well as the apparently limited preparedness by donor countries to meet most of their critical commitments, as the 2008 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration established. The lack of

substantial progress on the side of donor commitments could lead to unintended negative consequences such as decreased enthusiasm among the aid recipients to undertake activities that are envisaged under the PD commitments. In such situations there would be little interest in the findings and lessons learned through the PD evaluations.

An appropriate remedy to the observed limitations for the PD Evaluations would be to entrench evaluation in the design of development interventions, as suggested by Hellmut in his comments. In this regard, perhaps the next review of the PD would be an appropriate juncture to introduce an elaborate evaluation system for the PD and its descendants.

Best regards, Charles Orina

Ivan Garcia Marengo, 14.4.2010

c. What are the challenges in ensuring the quality of PD evaluation, within and across Country Evaluation Teams?

d. What are the challenges for using the findings and lessons learned?

To both questions, for me there is an essential failure of the PD and its applications: that appropriation, alignment, harmonization, etc. are considered only for donors re. recipient governments. People, the final receivers, and the only ones which should count, are not considered in the PD. It is bad that donors do not take into account the real needs and conditions of the poor in the world, but is it as bad as this that the only ones whose criteria are taken into consideration are the "Southern" governments, and not the people of the poor world. And the only effective solution for solving this failure is taking into consideration the organized civil society. Civil society is much closer to the poor and more motivated than any government. And that is the reason why the Accra Plan of Action, in one paragraph, is superior to the PD.

Iván García Marengo, Coordinadora Civil, Nicaragua

ISPE NGO - Lanre Rotimi, 15.4.2010

Dear Denis,

We commend earlier contributors to week 1 discussion. We align ourselves fully with Hellmut Eggers points. Please find our response to week 1 question aimed at moving forward thought set out in Hellmut Eggers submission.

Q1a. What are the challenges in ensuring the quality of PD evaluation, within and across Country Evaluation Teams?

Our Organization's study findings indicate that Evaluation Quality within Paris Declaration 2005 (PD) and Accra Action Agenda 2008 (AAA) should be focused on Stakeholders:

1. Delivering on Promises Made
2. Achieving Value for Money in Policies, Programs and Projects Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation
3. Achieving Fitness for Purpose in Policies, Programs and Projects Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

We have found further that any attempt to assess performance of each relevant stakeholder that is not based on Good Development, M&E and Performance Management Practice Study, is guess work. Yet such study is lacking in the ongoing Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of PD and AAA.

It is bad that the 8 MDGs are in reality 2 Goals - Poverty Elimination and Environmental Sustainability and 8 Targets. It is worse that PD in reality has NO Goals (and Stakeholders should consider adopting the 2 MDGs in reality - Poverty Elimination and Environmental Sustainability); 12 Indicators and corresponding Targets by 2010; while AAA has NO GOALS but set out six points within Looking Forward in which commitments were renewed to meet 2010 Targets and report back to the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011. We are not aware of any mechanism for objectively validating any of the 12 Indicators within ongoing implementation of PD and AAA.

The implication of the above is that achieving improving quality and productivity in the Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of PD and AAA Policies, Programs and Projects from Village to Global Levels calls for:

1. A General Agreement on Development, M&E and Performance Management Goals, Targets and Indicators on one hand and General Agreement on Development, M&E and Performance Management Terminologies, Standards and Systems on the other hand. Both General Agreements should be underlined by SMART objectively validated Indicators.
2. General appreciation by all relevant central actors on international institutions, developed countries and developing countries sides that:
 - a) Achieving PD and AAA ambitions on successful and sustainable basis greatly depends on overcoming Thinking Challenge. This point is captured clearly by Hellmut Eggers, in his paper commenting on the 2009 Claremont Debate and Lanre Rotimi, in his paper making observations on Hellmut Eggers paper. Copies of the papers have been sent by separate mail to the moderator. This way, should existing rules allow, the moderator could release the papers to members.
 - b) Overcoming the Thinking Challenge in (2a) greatly depends on correctly identifying, promoting and protecting Development, M&E and Performance Management professionals who have the Hard Competencies - learning and skills and Soft Competencies - character, courage and mind set to grapple effectively with the challenges of professionally tackling all real and complex systemic PD and AAA human factor, political process, technical process, financial factor and consultation process problems on the ground on international institutions, developed countries and developing countries.
3. Genuine appreciation by all relevant central actors on international institutions, developed countries and developing countries that achieving (1) and (2) above on successful and sustainable basis greatly depends on:
 - a) Creating demand for Development, M&E and Performance Management Services as basis for creating supply for Development, M&E and Performance Management Services.
 - b) Changing the rules to create New Commissioning Framework that effectively drives (1) at sub-national, national and international levels on international institutions, developed countries and developing countries sides.
 - c) Creating New Competencies Framework(s) that is single or multiple one worldwide competencies framework(s) for all involved in Development, M&E and Performance Management that effectively drives (1) at sub-national, national and international levels on international institutions, developed countries and developing countries sides.

Without the measures set out above, it would be an uphill task at best and a mission impossible at worst, to write the articles to the headlines identified in Hellmut's submission. The ultimate consequences of failure to write good articles to the headlines, that is failure to achieve PD and AAA ambitions, could be catastrophic for all stakeholders in our fragile planet.

Q1b. What are the challenges for using the findings and lessons learned?

Our Organization's study findings are that the overarching lessons learnt is that NO lessons have been learnt over the years. This has resulted in the fact that PD from 2005 to date and AAA from 2008 to date in Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation; stakeholders have largely repeated Development, M&E and Performance Management problems that were in existence 50 years ago, 25 years ago, 5 years ago to date.

This point is underlined by Kerry Abbot's and Charles Orina in their respective submission. We do not have their email and so could not copy them as we have copied other contributors. Is it not a GREAT challenge that as at date we have had only three contributions, mine being the third to this very important discussion? Is this not part of fundamental issues to be professionally tackled within lessons learned?

The greatest contribution that this PD Initiative could make towards achieving International Development Cooperation Targets on successful and sustainable basis, is to take the lead in actually learning lessons from lessons learnt and going further to persuade and if necessary pressure other relevant central actors to do the same. We shall elaborate on our thoughts in this regard in week 2 discussions on Challenges and Opportunities.

We encourage all who have made contributions to react to points made by each other. We invite all members who are yet to make contribution to get on board - share their experience, expertise and exposure. The M&E profession in particular and interrelated professions - Development, Performance Management (Service delivery), Procurement and Human Rights, in general, can only take their rightful place in International Development Cooperation Initiatives, if professionals in all 5 professions

raise their VOICES in continuing constructive engagement of all relevant central actors on way forward in the common interest, common future and common humanity of all concerned worldwide in achieving 2 Goals ambitions of Poverty Elimination and Environmental Sustainability.

Warm regards, Lanre Rotimi, International Society for Poverty Elimination, Abuja, Nigeria, West Africa.

Hellmut Eggers, 15.4.2010

Dear Colleagues!

I have read the reactions of Lanre Rotimi and Ivan García Marengo with great interest. I note especially that

- (a) Lanre maintains that there has not been any effective lesson learning in International development cooperation up to the present (which, if true, would be truly appalling!), with the consequence that there have not been any advances towards poverty elimination;
- (b) Ivan deplores the “displacement” of the true protagonists of the development scene, the poor, by the “officials” (my “interpretation”, Ivan, but I think it catches the spirit of your remarks with which I fully agree!).

I read the two observations under (a) and (b) above as an invitation to concentrate the PD/AAA debate on the ONE objective that will count in the end: How to advance in Poverty Alleviation (and finally Elimination)? Let me express this objective in technical terms:

How can Development Interventions (Policies, Programs and Projects), no matter whether ODA co-financed or not, succeed in creating sustainable benefits for their target groups (the poor)?

This question is closely related to the formulation of the “Assessment Frameworks” whose establishment the PD/AAA propagates without giving so much as the tiniest hint on what these frameworks should look like or what they are supposed to achieve. I have already underlined earlier that I think this is the biggest gap and the decisive weakness of the PD/AAA and that their evaluation should make this gap the centre of its positively critical conclusions/recommendations. Ideally, then, these recommendations would come up with a proposal for a “Master Assessment Framework” concentrating on poverty alleviation/elimination, that is the creation of sustainable benefits for the target groups of development interventions.

Please note that I am all in favor of Denis’ idea of taking the debate through the series of weekly questions that will cover all of the essentials of the PD. That’s fine! My hunch is, however, that this positive and necessary exercise will only reinforce, not dilute, the central position of the above question. We’ll see at the end.

Over to you and Keep smiling! Hellmut

Ivan Garcia Marengo, 16.4.2010

Dear Hellmut, I think you caught the essential of my criticism, but to be just with myself I add some refinements. My point is: who are the real or most effective interpreters of the needs of the poor? The government or civil society? To be totally right, the best interpreters of the poverty are the poor themselves, but in a second instance, civil society is better than governments. And interpretation of needs refers not only to the needs for eradicating poverty, but in general to the defense of all the human rights of all. Our governments in the South, and that is the case of Nicaragua, pretend that they know better than anybody else, including the poor themselves, what are the needs of the poor and what are the best means for alleviating or eradicating poverty. Similarly, they think that they are the best connoisseurs of the needs in general of the population. Whenever we in civil society try to educate people in civility or citizenship, because we think that, given the low level of formal education of the majority of our people, they need some education from outside of themselves, the government accuses us of trying to make government disliked by the population. It is even worse when we try to educate people in civil rights, freedom of thoughts and expression, and similar items; they even accused us of destabilizing the government, sort of being terrorists, with the help of international cooperation.

Iván García Marengo

Hellmut Eggers, 16.4.2010

Dear Iván!

You are surely right when underlining the “natural” arrogance of those in government and other official positions! As they say concerning the “Inspecteurs des Finances” in France: “Ils savent TOUT mais rien de plus” (They know ALL but nothing more than that!) Isn't that lovely? Gets right to the roots of that stupid arrogance of «knowing best»!

Surely, Civil Society is closer to the realities of the poor than government officials (which doesn't mean, however, that there wouldn't be also some good government PPP's (Projects, Programs and Policies) around). My ideal would be that all, officials and non-officials, agree on ONE fundamental Objective for all PPP's: create sustainable benefits for their target groups. This is why I am insisting so much on the need to conceive operational “Assessment Frameworks” that remained so vague in the PD/AAA, a fact that should be highlighted in a useful PD Evaluation! These assessment frameworks could and should encapsulate, “in a nutshell”, the ABC of a common “development language” for all and be firmly focused on the creation of sustainable benefits for target groups. I repeat that I believe our group could conceive and agree on a “Master Assessment Framework” acceptable to ALL, and I would also have a fair idea on how to arrive at such Framework. But for that to happen, our group would have to agree to working towards the establishment of this tool. Maybe those who have taken part in our exchange of views so far might take the lead in such endeavor?

Over to you, and keep smiling! Hellmut

Adiza Lamien Ouando, 16.4.2010

Dear all,

Thank so much for these rich and deep ideas and analysis. Kindly find my contribution.

Q1 - How can evaluators ensure reliable findings and applicable lessons learned?

a. What are the challenges in ensuring the quality of PD evaluation, within and across Country Evaluation Teams?

It is not only up to the evaluators to ensure the quality of PD if we agreed that evaluation should be a participative and inclusive learning process.

I think that a first step is that the Declaration be accessible and known by all stakeholders and not only by donors, governments' high officials (not always) and evaluation specialists. This immediately drives us to the problem of languages in which the Declaration has been translated. I am an African Evaluator working in Africa mainly. Is the Declaration available in regional African languages? 50 years after independences and in the spirit of this Declaration, there is a need to take decision on the principle of Official language. Official languages should be Regional or national language and the present Official Languages be given the status of Foreign or International Communication languages.

How can the evaluators insure when everything is written or said in foreign languages. How can we speak of quality without people participation?

b. What are the challenges for using the findings and lessons learned?

TORs of evaluation missions give clear evidence of the findings. We are usually asked to assess donors' program's impact instead of contribution to countries policies' impact. We still have various donors' policies in Health, Education, Gender, Water and sanitation and so on. We should have donors' contribute to contribute to countries policies and strategies.

For Programs and projects that still have to produce three to five or more technical and financial reports according to their funding sources the Paris declaration is still a theory.

The word partnership still needs to be given content because until now, the one who pays is the one who have the power. One thing that makes me laugh during evaluation missions is this type of picture: the car has one donor's name, the Office another, and when visiting schools, you can have for instances seven latrines with seven donors' names on it. And this makes me think what my house would look like if you had to put the names of all my friends, relatives and colleagues on things they have given me or helped me to buy.

Best Greetings, Adiza Lamien Ouando

Victor Manuel Quintero, 17.4.2010

Dear Colleagues. Thank you, Pablo for translating into Spanish this debate. Here are my comments.

In order to draw lessons - lessons learned - I think that requires both the Agency and who executes the project must establish mechanisms from the Organizational Learning point of view. For a while Peter Senge teaches us that to create intellectual capital required five disciplines: Learning the lessons, which are necessary to systematize. To this end both agencies as project operators should set from the start, from the proposal a Learning System contract where the establishment of procedures, space, and resources to draw lessons from the projects are clear. In the 28th to 30th July will be held in San José, Costa Rica, the International Congress and III EVALUATION CONFERENCE ReLAC where one of its Panels will discuss Assessment for Learning.

A thousand greetings. Victor Manuel Quintero, Cali, Colombia

Victor Manuel Quintero, 16.4.2010

I fully agree with Professor García. Cooperation is rarely evaluated (ex-ante, mid-term, ex-post) by the users, final beneficiaries. It is really necessary to know realities, expectations, opinions, feelings of the community of beneficiaries; without these requirements the evaluation managed by the Agency is still incomplete.

Cordial greetings, Victor Manuel Quintero, Maestría Gestión Pública, Universidad Santiago de Cali, Cali, Colombia

Kerry Abbott, 16.4.2010

In response to Hellmut's latest comments, there is still a division between aims and methods. Focusing on basic needs provision is the aim of those dealing with poverty elimination, and yet the methods employed by development agencies focus on administrative themes linked to promoting democratic governance, gender equality, anti-corruption, etc--issues that might affect levels of poverty, if they were effectively designed and implemented, but which might not. Again, there are interests that divide the bureaucracies of the aid world from the varied needs/cultural systems of the recipients. No detailed framework will resolve that. Only a change in mindset and motivation will.

Best wishes, Kerry

Charles Orina, 17.4.2010

Hi Discussants,

1. The comments which have been made so far have been quite illuminating on the increasingly emotive subject of aid generally and the PD and AAP in particular. They reflect the "Tower of Babel" phenomenon on aid, from conceptualization to its impact on the "assumed" beneficiaries. However with respect to evaluation there are documents with guidelines on how it should be undertaken, taking into account the interests of the diverse stakeholders in any intervention. For example, in the African context there are the African Evaluation Guidelines. These guidelines provide a "common language" on evaluation and a basis for our suggestions for improving data quality for any PD evaluation.
2. We should not lose sight of the fact that it would be through an evaluation that information-based conclusions may be drawn on whether the aid resources for poverty alleviation, as well the implementation mechanisms as outlined in the PD and the AAP are relevant and adequate for the realization of the assumed goals. However, and as it has been pointed out, undertaking an evaluation of the PD and its offspring would be a daunting task given the noted gaps and deficiencies in their design and the multiplicity of objectives among the different stakeholders in the aid architecture. I therefore agree with the observations which have been made that improvements in the quality of data and identification of lessons learned would necessarily entail acknowledging the shortcomings in the PD and the AAP and thereafter determining data types and collection methodologies which would take account of the shortcomings.
3. The discussion also points to a dire need to accept the centrality of data as the only objective basis to underpin the acceptability of our diverse opinions, beliefs, or positions on aid; the determination of its purpose and intended beneficiaries; the mechanisms for getting the aid to the beneficiaries; and assessment of the various stages in the whole process. Data remains an indispensable resource for all the key owners and/or drivers of the poverty alleviation

interventions regardless of whether they are Governments, Donors, or Civil Society Organisations. In this regard, one of the serious shortcomings which any evaluator of the PD and AAP is the absence of baseline data from which progress would be measured.

4. Hellmut makes a valid point in seeing the current question as an invitation to concentrate the PD/AAA debate on the ONE objective that will count in the end: How can Development Interventions (Policies, Programs and Projects), no matter whether ODA co-financed or not, succeed in “creating sustainable benefits for their target groups (the poor)”? Indeed this has been at the core of the un-ending debates on aid in other forums to date. In my view the importance of the question is such that it should be allocated a whole week after week 4 to be discussed on its own.

Charles Orina

Kerry Abbott, 17.4.2010

Ivan, I do not think civil society is necessarily representing the interests of the poor. In many societies they represent a political opposition. Many of them are created by foreign donors because they agree to represent a certain agenda and it enables ambitious individuals to establish themselves and to try to become an alternative leadership.

I tend to focus on the civil society that is created and sustained by the local community and which does not rely on foreign support. I have seen cases of sectoral resources divided between the governmental ministry and NGOs/CSOs which has not served the creation of effective service delivery. So, in my experience, "civil society" organizations are not necessarily more effective or well meaning.

Donna Mertens, 17.4.2010

A critical analysis by UNIFEM of the Paris Declaration follows: Given the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment to development, a 'gender-blind' interpretation and subsequent implementation of the Paris Declaration principles jeopardizes achievement of the international development goals including the Millennium Development Goals. It further erodes the whole essence of 'development effectiveness'. For the aid effectiveness agenda to result in overall gains in gender equality and women's empowerment, these goals must be recognized as a key component of national development planning, including poverty reduction strategies.

I wonder what people think about the integration of gender issues as an important challenge and omission from the Declaration?

Donna M. Mertens, PhD Editor, Journal of Mixed Methods Research, Gallaudet University, Washington DC

Hellmut Eggers, 17.4.2010

Dear Kerry!

You are, of course, perfectly right when you say that mindset and motivation are more important than any bureaucratic tools (frameworks!).

However, I think that this group, if they would set their minds to establishing a “Master Framework” incorporating the most important experiences made (as identified by evaluations) and concentrating on the creation of sustainable benefits for target groups, would start on a worthwhile and motivating collaborative process between all partners involved. Thus, technical progress seems to me to be linked to motivation and the desire to collaborate.

So, why not try to develop such “Master Framework” together?

Keep smiling! Hellmut

Kerry Abbott, 17.4.2010

Dear Hellmut, You are welcome, anytime. I am interested in cooperative efforts. I already have a framework in mind that I use, depending on the constraints of the context.

However, as an independent evaluator, I need agencies to be willing to set aside their other interests, and focus on the priorities and practices to which they are meant to be committed, such as the PD...

Kerry

Ivan García Marengo, 17.4.2010

I agree in that neither civil society nor governments NECESARILY represent the interests of the poor. What are the conditions or the factors that automatically generate "good" civil society, or the ones that also automatically create a "bad" one? I do not think they exist. The fact that civil society becomes aligned with political opposition is not necessarily a bad signal either, because you might have governments that deserve that the best of the citizenry aligns against them. The fact that some civil society is funded by foreign donors is not a rule either for qualifying civil society in the good or bad side. If only that civil society which is "supported and sustained" by local communities deserves to be admitted as valid and appraisable, then you admit since the beginning that civil society will not go beyond some rather narrow limits of growth and development, specially in so poor and unequal economies like the ones we have in the Third World. And in such conditions you could hardly think of a civil society able to have political incidence, advocacy, development of participatory democracy, or share in the decisions making process of its own society. Even the activities oriented toward service delivery for the poor, will not be properly financed by just the efforts and organization of small communities. Who among the poor will sustain financially that civil society for a good service delivery and for the types of activities needed for developing a strong capacity of political incidence? Or do you think that the oligarchs or the rich of that society are going to support (against themselves) that civil society? Or, do you think that in poorly developed markets as the ones of our economies, could we organize activities able to support us from the commercial gains achieved by those activities and at the same time leaving us enough time for exercising our advocacy or political incidence? These types of activities of civil society can only be sufficiently sustained by that part of civil society, or citizenry, which are able in the First World to generously, unselfishly cooperate for the sustentation of the politically, and rightly, minded civil society, or citizenry, of the Third World (by the way, these activities are part, very essential, of the fight for eradicating poverty in our countries and in the world). That is the best of civil society solidarity we can think of.

So, on the other hand, I do not think that the only activity that civil society is called to do is service delivery. Citizenship building, political incidence, "concientization" (as we call it in Latin America) is also an obligation of civil society inside of our countries. And that might be called political activity, but not necessarily partisan activity, because is not meant for grabbing the political, representative power of the state and enjoying its benefits but for creating citizens participation, which is something political parties are not interested in and something that really increases the quality of our democracy, making it not only representative but also participatory.

And all that in Nicaragua, for example, as well as in Central America and many countries of Latin America, and possibly in other continents, and also among the poor sectors of developed countries, is not just theorizing. We are living and wanting to improve it very strongly.

Iván García Marengo, Coordinadora Civil, Nicaragua

Kerry Abbott, 17.4.2010

Dear Donna, in my view, if you accept the principle that the agenda has to be set by the beneficiary parties and partners and not the donors, then you wait until they place the gender equality issue as a priority. It was not a priority in Western societies until they reached a certain level of development.

The priorities of the country are a useful indicator of their capacity and development and can only be gradually influenced by outside interventions.

Kerry Abbott (Ms)

Charles Orina, 17.4.2010

Hi Donna, in many countries women form the majority of people who are affected by poverty (particularly in rural areas) and therefore poverty reduction interventions are likely to have greater impact if women are central in the design of the programs and their subsequent implementation. However their inclusion should be in the context of a proper analysis of causes of poverty in the subject areas, the persons who should be targeted if best results are to be achieved, and the most appropriate aid delivery mechanisms. There are no convincing indications that such an analysis preceded the PD and hence the weaknesses which are being exposed in the ongoing contributions, including the lack of a gender dimension which had eluded some of us until you brought it out.

Best regards, Charles Orina

Charles Orina, 18.4.2010

Dear K Abbot, the five PD principles, which unfortunately appear to recognize donors and partner governments only, provide a useful platform but which needs to be strengthened by bringing on board components, such as women empowerment and representation of the beneficiaries at the grassroots, which may actually lead to a faster achievement of the intended objectives. In many developing countries, (and certainly in my country, Kenya) women empowerment is now recognized as being necessary for faster and more equitable development as it seeks to bring on board and benefit from the contribution from a large section of society which had been ignored for too long.

As I see it, the issue here is not whether women empowerment and grass root representation should be included in the implementation process of the PD and the Accra Action Plan but how this may be done.

Charles Orina

Kerry Abbott (to Ivan), 18.4.2010

Yes, I think each case has to be evaluated on its merits and the terms of the context.

Again, if the PD is followed, donor support for civil society would be in accord with indigenous support or it would never be sustainable.

I do not know much about Nicaragua, but work in conflict regions where the NGO/CSO sector is large, fragmented, and prevents the best minds and energies from working together to create a viable whole. Instead, each is encouraged to set up his own NGO fiefdom, backed by his own donor.

Kerry Abbott, 18.4.2010

Dear Charles,

I think the point of the PD is to assure the direction of aid is determined by the beneficiaries not by the donors. So if they put forward the method of focusing on women, that is fine.

The problem comes when donors set it as a proviso, because they want to push gender equality or even quotas. The benefits of working with women to further development aims have been noted. Again, the right method must be drafted by the beneficiaries. Where I work, women gain more respect from men when they have skills--such as literacy and income generation. From there, they take on leadership roles and can have social/economic impact.

Kerry

Denis Jobin, 19.4.2010

Colleagues,

While the discussion thus far embraces some of the week two questions, perhaps we can continue focusing on the challenges in Evaluating the PD, including its relevance and effectiveness (already discussed in week one but we can continue and push the issues!!).

I would like to take the opportunity to kindly remind you of two of the four objectives of the discussions:

1. To increase awareness of development evaluation community of the issues and challenges related with the Paris Declaration and its evaluation;
2. To improve evaluation methods and approaches used in evaluating the Paris Declaration and its principles.

Here are the questions that should keep driving our focus as much as possible for the week two (or keep continuing since it is already covered in week one!!). Thanks for the interesting discussion and sharing your views thus far!! Cheers!!

Denis Jobin

Week 2 questions: Challenges and opportunities

What are the key challenges in measuring the PD; its relevance and its effectiveness?

- a. How can each of these challenges be successfully addressed?***
- b. How will attribution be addressed?***

Charles Orina, 20.4.2010

Dear Discussants,

Assessing the effectiveness and effectiveness of the PD and the AAA is likely to face serious challenges because the initiatives encompass many aspects with diverse players and with goals which, so far at least, have been changing. However out of the difficulties the evaluation professionals may find an opportunity for getting their role to be recognized more so that they may hereafter play a more active role in the aid and development process. Here below please find my observations:

Challenges and Opportunities in Measuring the PD

Question: What are the key challenges in measuring the PD; its relevance and its effectiveness?

The Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), 2008 is an integral part of the PD and therefore constitutes the basket of interventions to which this week's question should refer.

Assessing the PD would face a number of challenges, including:

- Delineating scope of assessment would be problematic because there appears to be a lack of uniformity and/or continuity in goals for the interventions. Whereas the aim in 2005 was "...to reform the ways we deliver and manage aid as we look ahead to the UN five-year review of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)", in 2008 the purpose for agreed Agenda for Action was "to eradicating poverty and promoting peace and prosperity by building stronger, more effective partnerships that enable developing countries to realize their development goals".
- Carrying out an assessment between 2005 and 2010 (or over any other time frame) would be face consistence problems because there has been a reduction in the key commitments from five in 2005 to three in 2008 and, secondly, corresponding actions under the commitments have also been varied and expanded.
- There appears to be different interpretations and commitments by both the donors and partner governments on two of the three areas for focus which had been identified as being key for accelerated development, namely deepening country ownership in the management of donor resources in the target countries and building more effective and inclusive partnerships between and within countries.
- There are many other on-going reforms in many countries which are even recognized by the PD and AAA. It would therefore be difficult to link any progress in poverty reduction, more peace, and prosperity among other developments in the partner countries, to the PD and AAA measures.

a. How can each of these challenges be successfully addressed?

Measuring progress and/or assessing the relevance, effectiveness, etc. of the PD and AAA would require undertaking separate evaluations within each country, as well as segregating the various commitments and players. An evaluator undertaking any of such evaluations would have to decide, based on the particular circumstances in each case, which methodology to apply.

Opportunity for Evaluators to have an input into the PD and AAA Processes

The frames of the PD and AAA acknowledge the need for monitoring progress made under these initiatives and expect to use the results from such assessments in reviewing progress and charting of the way forward. In 2008 they said:

"We ask the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness to continue monitoring progress on implementing the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. We recognize that additional work will be required to improve the methodology and indicators of progress of aid effectiveness. In 2011, we will undertake the third round of monitoring that will tell us whether we have achieved the targets for 2010 agreed in Paris in 2005. To carry forward this work, we will need to develop institutionalized processes for the joint and equal partnership of developing countries and the engagement of stakeholders".

In this context there is an opportunity for evaluators through IDEAS or through any other of their professional organisations (some of which, or their members, may have participated in the 2008 deliberations) to point out the weaknesses/limitations in the current assessment frameworks and to recommend for adoption appropriate systems, which may be taken on boarded by 2011.

b. How will attribution be addressed?

How much progress may be attributed to the PD/AAA measures will vary from case to case depending on the range and depth of other reforms which a country may have been undertaking prior and alongside the PD and AAA measures? Therefore it will depend on an evaluator to decide on how that aspect may be assessed at the country or commitment level.

Charles Orina, Nairobi, Kenya

Ivan Garcia Marengo, 21.4.2010

I assume that the coordinators of this debate are clear that the Open Forum/GFG are realizing 50 national consultations whose results will be presented in regional (supranational) assemblies and consolidated in the Global Assembly in August in Montreal (*editor's remark: the Global Assembly was moved from Montreal to Turkey, September 2010*). From this, a global consensus as a position of CSOs in the High Level Forum of Seoul is expected.

Iván García Marengo, Coordinadora Civil, Nicaragua

Lanre Rotimi (ISPE NGO), 20.4.2010

Dear,

As we await members response to points made in our mail of 19 April, particularly on who fills in the gap for Hellmut, to provide the group with inspirational leadership driving discussions in the two weeks Hellmut is away, we have decided to make our submissions setting out our thoughts on practical answers to Week 2 questions in two parts. Please find:

Part 1

The PD/AAA overarching challenge is to professionally tackle the PD/AAA overarching lessons learnt and to achieve this; there is urgent need for Evaluation of Evaluation, which is the evaluation of:

1. Major PD/AAA Development, M&E and Performance Management Services Providers Policies, Programs and Projects.
2. Major PD/AAA Development, M&E and Performance Management Services Users Policies, Programs and Projects.
3. All Development, M&E and Performance Management Professional Organizations at global and all 8 regions worldwide levels - a) US, Canada and Western Europe; b) Eastern and Southern Africa; c) South Asia; d) Western and Central Africa; e) Latin America and Caribbean; f) East Asia and the Pacific; g) Middle East and North Africa; h) Central and Eastern Europe and CIS; Policies, Programs and Projects.
4. All National Development, M&E and Performance Management Professional Organization in all developed countries and all developing countries participating in PD/AAA Initiative; Policies, Programs and Projects.

To ensure that it is NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL, the suggested four Evaluations of Evaluation initiatives would be undertaken ONLY by Development, M&E and Performance Management Services Providers who meet minimum certain standards of Hard Competencies - Learning and Skills and Soft Competencies - Character, Courage and Mind Set; adequate to achieve success on sustainable basis in the practical implementation of all useful suggestions and pertinent ideas HARVESTED at the end of the Group's four weeks of useful, productive and result oriented discussions. We shall elaborate on this point in Week 4 discussion within submission setting out our thoughts on PD/AAA Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB). Incidentally, why is ECB, despite its IMPORTANCE not included as topics either on its own or within appropriate topic in any of the four themes under discussion?

It is clear that all relevant PD/AAA stakeholders do not need any fresh study findings to confirm that ongoing PD/AAA implementation has failed woefully to achieve 2010 targets stakeholders freely set for themselves in 2005, because discussions to date reinforce VISIBLE EVIDENCE of this failure on the ground. Therefore, there is urgent need to set PD / AAA 2015 targets to coincide with MDGs' 2015 targets. Once this is done, the four Evaluations of Evaluation suggested above would simply:

1. Gather baseline data from realities on the ground to determine where each PD/AAA concerned central actor is (A)
2. Use PD/AAA 2015 targets which coincide with MDGs' 2015 targets to determine where each PD/AAA concerned central actor needs to be (B)

3. Come up with practical and purposeful recommendations for MOVING FORWARD from (A) to (B), including sound mechanisms for effective and efficient monitoring of the implementation of these sound recommendations based on two principles - What Gets Measured Gets Done and What Gets Licensed Gets Regulated and Controlled.

Once more, we invite existing contributors to react to points made by others with emphasis placed on practical solutions to fundamental issues / questions raised and existing observers to appreciate that the JOY in BELONGING to a serious professional group such as that we all collectively TRYING to BUILD and NURTURE in this PD Initiative Yahoo Group; is in the ACTIVE participation and NOT in the LOOKING ON.

Warm regards, Lanre Rotimi, International Society for Poverty Elimination, Abuja, Nigeria, West Africa

Charles Orina, 21.4.2010

L Rotimi,

The following is my comment to your observations:

The quality assurance initiatives that are envisaged in the comments by the Group would be useful to underpin the integrity of findings and recommendations that may arise from our discussions. In the long run there is a need to establish effective and sufficient competences in all countries for faster social and economic development. Indeed the PD/AAA emphasize local ownership of the process and this requires that the competences that you have outlined are in place. However addressing the CURRENT limitations to satisfactory evaluations of the PD/AAA initiatives, either in whole or its components, requires initiatives with a shorter time frame such as expanding the composition of the Task Force on the Implementation of the PD/AAA to include more disciplines and more representation of the aid recipient countries and CSOs.

Charles Orina, Nairobi, Kenya

Lanre Rotimi, ISPE NGO, 21.4.2010

Dear Denis,

In response to Week Two questions we had earlier sent:

1. Mail of 19 April commenting on Week 1 discussions and announcing that we shall take into consideration points made by Kerry Abbot and Adiza Lamin and the PD and AAA central question identified by Hellmut - How can development interventions (Policies, Programs and Projects), no matter whether ODA co-financed or not, succeed in creating sustainable benefits for their target groups (the poor)? - in suggesting answers to Week 2 Questions. This mail is yet to be posted.
2. Mail of 21 April in which we provided Part 1 answers to Week 2 Questions, essentially identifying the PD/AAA overarching challenge as ways and means of professionally tackling PD/AAA overarching lessons learnt identified in our answers to Week 1 Questions and coming up with our thoughts on future priorities and direction for effectively tackling this overarching challenge.

This mail provides Part 2 answers to Week 2 Questions.

Other Challenges

1. Harvesting Challenge: Ways and means of ensuring that all good suggestions and pertinent ideas generated in the 4 weeks discussions are harvested; processed into draft report that is commented upon by members before Final report is produced; ways and means of ensuring optimum utilization and dissemination of the Final report among all relevant PD/AAA stakeholders.
2. Thinking Challenge: ways and means of correctly answering the central question identified by Hellmut, taking into consideration that within PD/AAA Development, M&E and Performance Management Policies, Programs and Projects, there are:
 - a) Multi Disciplinary - all existing fields of study
 - b) Multi Sectoral - private sector, public sector and voluntary sector
 - c) Inter Ministerial - all ministries, departments and agencies
 - d) Inter Governmental - all tiers of Government

Issues within each PD/AAA donor country and recipient country that need to be professionally tackled, if the Master Assessment Framework suggested by Hellmut is to be established on successful and sustainable basis.

To achieve these, there is a strong need to bring whole of constituency thinking to bear on Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of PD/AAA Policies, Programs and Projects appropriate to each Constituency. For example:

At global level - bringing whole of World thinking to bear on finding PD/AAA global solutions to PD/AAA global problems.

At each of the 8 regions Level - bringing whole of region thinking to bear on finding PD/AAA region solutions to PD/AAA region problems.

At each donor country / recipient country level - bringing whole of country thinking to bear on finding PD/AAA national solutions to PD/AAA national problems.

3. Powerlessness Challenge:

- a) Professionally tackling viscous circle of recipient countries political leaders, public service leaders and civil service leaders largely pursuing personal economic interests at the expense of national interest and so powerless implementing National Development Policies, Programs and Projects that effectively deliver sustainable benefits to their citizens, particularly the poor.
- b) Donor countries political leaders, public service leaders and civil service leaders largely pursuing International Development Cooperation Policies, Programs and Projects in ways that deliver disproportionate benefits to developed countries at the expense of delivering sustainable benefits to citizens of recipient countries, particularly the poor, in a WIN - WIN arrangement between developed and developing countries.
- c) International institutions heads, senior administrators and senior technocrats largely pursuing International Development Cooperation Policies, Programs and Projects in ways that deliver disproportionate benefits to developed countries at the expense of delivering sustainable benefits to citizens of recipient countries, particularly the poor, in a WIN - WIN arrangement between developed and developing countries.

4. Institution Challenge: Identifying, promoting and protecting Development, M&E and Performance Management Professional Services Providers who can build and operate the Master Assessment Framework suggested by Hellmut, with Village to Global reach, providing uniform complimentary services to development, M&E and Performance Management Services Users on both PD/AAA donor countries and recipient countries sides in 8 regions worldwide:

- i) US, Canada and Western Europe
- ii) Eastern and Southern Africa
- iii) South Asia
- iv) West and Central Africa
- v) Latin America and the Caribbean
- vi) East Asia and the Pacific
- vii) Middle East and North Africa
- viii) Central and Eastern Europe and CIS.

Professionals in these types of Institutions will collectively speak 6 Official Languages:-

- a) Arabic
- b) Chinese
- c) English
- d) French
- e) Russian
- f) Spanish

5. Implementation Challenge: Ways and means of Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Master Assessment Framework, which in practical terms is a "Single Agenda Budget Implementation Framework" by all concerned stakeholders, that is built upon 3 frameworks simultaneously - Framework of Dialogue, Framework of Cooperation and Framework of Reform.

6. Impact Challenge: Ways and means of:

- a) Getting President, Board, institutional members and individual members of IDEAS, IOCE at global level; AfREA, EES and equivalent at regional levels and UKES, CES, AEA, SAMEA, SMEAN and equivalent at national level in all identified 8 regions
- b) Director General, senior administrators and senior technocrats of OECD and ILO
- c) Political leaders, public service leaders and civil service leaders of OECD / DAC

To work jointly with themselves and other relevant stakeholders towards effectively driving Development, M&E and Performance Management Change, from Village to Global levels, adequate to achieve PD/AAA ambitions on successful and sustainable basis.

7. Economy and the Elections: Ways and means of conducting credible elections that consistently throws up political leaders who have the competencies to professionally tackle contemporary Development, M&E and Performance Management Problems of the time on both rich and poor countries sides. Gordon Brown is Making End World Poverty an election issue in the May 2010 UK Elections. All Parties in all countries should do the same in their Elections and all citizens should elect into office the best candidates to do the job that should and need to be done, in each election.

Opportunities

1. Bright prospects of success achieving PD/AAA ambitions by 2015, providing opportunities for increasing standards of living and welfare for all citizens on both donor countries and recipient countries sides, particularly the poor.
2. Establishment / reestablishment of 5 professions - M&E, Development, Performance Management (Service delivery), Procurement and Human Rights and EMPOWERING these 5 professions to take their rightful place in world sustainable development initiatives.

Threats

1. Worsening world terrorism; world food, fuel and finance crises
2. Increasing world poverty, hunger, disease and environmental degradation
3. Increasing conflicts and wars within and between countries across the world

If not professionally tackled by concerned authorities in ways that include taking professional advice from professionals with adequate hard competencies - learning and skills and soft competencies - character, courage and mind set in the 5 professions could thwart work towards achieving PD/AAA ambitions by 2015 with ultimate grave consequences for all stakeholders in our fragile planet.

Recommendation Moving Forward

We shall make our recommendations either as Part 4 answers to Week 2 discussions that we could continue to update in Weeks 3 and 4 or wait till Week 4 and make our recommendations wholesale at an appropriate time before the end of the four weeks of discussions.

Last Word

Once more, we invite existing contributors to react to points made by others with emphasis placed on practical solutions to fundamental issues / questions raised and existing observers to appreciate that the JOY in BELONGING to a serious professional group such as that we all collectively TRYING to BUILD and NURTURE in this PD Initiative Yahoo Group; is in the ACTIVE participation and NOT in the LOOKING ON.

Warm regards, Lanre Rotimi, International Society for Poverty Elimination / Economic Alliance Group, Abuja, Nigeria, West Africa

Denis Jobin, 23.4.2010

Colleagues, Greeting from Canada!!

Dear Charles, I believe subscription is not related with interest, perhaps participation is a better indicator.

Colleagues, reflecting upon at the discussions thus far, we may want to re-focus more on evaluation related issues associated to the PD and the quality of its Evaluations for the moment. Many arguments have been shared, but let's pursue our discussion in responding to more specifically:

- ***How can evaluators ensure reliable findings and applicable lessons learned?***

- ***Which method (and experience that can be shared with us) is most suitable in a context of poor data or inexistent data?***
- ***Any tools methodological tools out there that can assure reliable findings? What specific experience/lessons can you share?***
- ***Is participatory approach relevant to the evaluation of the PD and/or its principles?***
- ***What are the challenges in ensuring the quality of PD evaluation, within and across Country Evaluation Teams?***
- ***How will attribution be addressed in measuring Paris Declaration effectiveness?***

To know more about the PD and AAA, please click on:

http://www.oecd.org/departement/0,3355,en_2649_3236398_1_1_1_1_1,00.html

Many Thanks!! Denis Jobin

Denis Jobin, 26.4.2010

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to launch the week 3 of our discussion. It would be particularly appreciated if you could share specific experience/tools. While we can come back to the previous questions, in your view and based on your experience:

Questions:

What tools and methods are most suitable for measuring progress in each PD principle?

How to assess the relations between the PD principles of aid effectiveness and development effectiveness principles addressed by the CSOs?

How can CSOs and other actor participate in PD evaluation?

Many thanks!! And have a great week!!

Best regards, Denis Jobin, Ottawa - Canada

Daniel Svoboda, 27.4.2010 (Week 2: Challenges and opportunities)

Dear friends,

First of all, I am sorry for joining the discussion only now, having a very limited time and access to internet the last few weeks.

I would like to provide my reflection to the first two weeks of discussion.

A) There are many gaps in the PD and still also in the AAA:

- The PD targets and indicators concern mostly donor perspective of aid delivery and there is a big gap between the "instrumental" targets and the ultimate goals - real benefits for the poor and marginalized people.
- There are almost no indicators in the PD related to quality of life (incl. gender or human rights issues mentioned a.o. by Donna Mertens).
- There is a very limited ownership of the PD (bit better for AAA) by people in developing countries - due to limited prior consultations or also due to language barriers as mentioned by Adiza Lamien Ouando.
- On the other hand, what prevents people and experts in developing countries to translate both documents into local languages (in case donors and governments do not do that)? And how many proposals were submitted by evaluators and local structures in advance to PD/AAA signatories?
- And what prevents professional evaluators to introduce their own - impact based - indicators for assessing of PD/AAA success or failure?

B) There were many important issues raised in the discussion, among others:

- Ivan Garcia Marengo highlighted the role of civil society organisations (and movements) - both in evaluating development policies, programs, projects and in development itself. It is really a crucial point as no development is possible without targeting people and without their real and inclusive engagement in development process. The role of CSOs must be recognized (and it already is in the AAA) and they should play a more active (and more responsible) role. Their

added values (and key challenge for them, too) can be recognized in specific partnership schemes, facilitation roles and, in particular, in their both-way accountability both to donors/governments (if they ask their funds) and people they are working with and for.

- A similar point was raised by Charles Orina - even the role of evaluators must be recognized and they also should play a more active role - not being only service providers!

C) It is really important to work on a “Master Assessment Framework” as proposed by Hellmut Eggers and on a “Learning System” proposed by Victor Manuel Quintero. I am ready to participate. Maybe some development effectiveness principles identified by CSOs (see point G below) can be used as inspiration.

D) It is necessary to challenge donor driven agenda, mentioned by many participants - Kerry Abbot among them. But it is also necessary to link programs of developing countries governments to real needs and opportunities identified jointly with the final beneficiaries - citizens.

E) Building and nurturing evaluation and development capacities and competencies is the urgent need in many countries and the professional evaluators (and their associations) have to be agents of change as highlighted by Lanre Rotimi, among others. And AAA explicitly mentions this issue, and well supports the idea of Country-led evaluations and systems promoted by IDEAS, UNICEF and other professional bodies. It is really important to be proactive in this regard - evaluating PD results from the point of view of beneficiaries (and not only of donors/governments) and recognizing and tackling gaps in capacities/competencies preventing the local engagement.

F) The discussion is really challenging and all discussants brought on the table important points we have to work with. And this work should not consist only in the envisaged draft/final report (definitely to be commented by the participants) but in particular in further focus on results/impacts oriented evaluations and on the impact of evaluations!

G) Regarding practical issues related to the proposed “Master Assessment Framework” or to suggested engagement of “whole” development constituencies and regions, it is almost impossible to reach a global consensus in a real time and we have to avoid repeating the PD failure of missing ownership. So we can do some kick-off for further global discussion only. On the other hand, there is a valuable precedent of a similar global process of the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness (see www.cso-effectiveness.org) recognized also in the AAA. The Open Forum is a unique space for CSOs worldwide to engage in a global and fully participatory process towards defining and introducing a framework of mutually shared development effectiveness principles. The Open Forum aims to provide a learning space, based on mutual trust, where CSOs can discuss issues and challenges relevant to their work and relationships as development actors. Through the Open Forum, CSOs are striving to build a consensus on commonly accepted principles to improve their development effectiveness and on basic standards for enabling environment where CSOs can fully apply and strengthen their specific roles in development. This framework will take account of CSO development visions, approaches, relationships, and impacts of their actions. The Open Forum will also facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogues with and among CSOs, donors and governments on these issues at country, regional and international levels. The framework of development effectiveness principles can thus be considered and discussed also by other development actors including evaluators, as impact is a joint result of multiple and diverse actors and factors (and this might be a response to Kerry Abbott who challenged the role of civil society and their fragmentation).

In summary, from my point of view, the PD/AAA evaluations should focus on:

- Revising the PD/AAA Theory of Change (Can “better transfers” of ODA money really change the life of the poor and marginalized?);
- Revising PD targets/indicators and introducing new PD/AAA indicators of development effectiveness (not only of aid delivery);
- Using participatory methods and working with the final beneficiaries;
- Creating and empowering local capacities and M&E systems and competencies and, in particular, using them;
- System of publishing/disseminating the evaluation results and using the lessons learned since the very first moment of setting evaluation objectives...

And finally, my brief response to Denis’ additional questions (23.4.2010):

- *How can evaluators ensure reliable findings and applicable lessons learned?*

By focusing on the use (and impact) of evaluations since the very beginning. Otherwise, there is no reason to carry out evaluations. Reliable findings then depend on reliable evaluators and reliable methods (there must be ever a chance to check/confirm the findings by another evaluator/method).

- *Which method (and experience that can be shared with us) is most suitable in a context of poor data or inexistent data?*

There are many methods how to reconstruct baseline data if needed or how to use reasonable (and also proxy) indicators. Evaluation methods must include appropriate data collection & analysis and must definitely work with available and reliable data (see also SMART/CREAM indicators). There is a little sense to deal with poor data and it is impossible to analyze non-existing data (except for some inception hypothesis).

- *Any methodological tools out there that can assure reliable findings? What specific experience/lessons can you share?*

Only one general recommendation - the findings must be understood in the same (at least similar) way by project supporters and project opponents. There is no perfect solution that fits all contexts. And right evaluation questions (related to the envisaged use of evaluation results) are the key, the methods come later.

- *Is participatory approach relevant to the evaluation of the PD and/or its principles?*

Definitely yes, if we wish to focus really on effectiveness (not on aid efficiency addressed by the PD). And in particular, the participatory methods should have been used while setting objectives, targets and indicators of the PD; unfortunately it was not the case.

- *What are the challenges in ensuring the quality of PD evaluation, within and across Country Evaluation Teams?*

Quality is important but I believe that professional evaluators have no critical problems with the quality. There are two much more important issues - a) quality of using lessons learned, and b) using PD evaluations for strengthening local/global ownership and for building and nurturing local capacities (process has sometimes almost the same importance as the results). Joint evaluations (mixed teams of local and international evaluators) and country-led evaluations, both partially mentioned also in the AAA, could be a good approach for increasing quality and use of evaluation results.

- *How will attribution be addressed in measuring Paris Declaration effectiveness?*

The diverse contribution of international ODA and local development programs was mentioned a.o. by Charles Orina. Even from that point of view, more important should be the attribution of the PD to the Theory of Development Change but, as mentioned earlier, there is a very limited focus on development impacts (democratic ownership, participation, inclusiveness etc.) in the PD. The solution might be to focus primarily on impacts (both positive and negative) and to reconstruct the ways/assumptions why and how these impacts were reached or complicated. There is no reason to have "donors"(or PD) name on each latrine" (thanks, Adiza Lamien Ouando for this example!), the impacts should be measured by the changes in life of the people and not by mandays and funds spent by each individual donor, or by their diverse interests and conditionalities (Kerry Abbott mentions also the missing institutional memory and limited sectoral or regional experience of many donors due to a short-term staff they use, and also their false promises and empty commitments).

So let us continue!

Best regards, Daniel Svoboda, a.o. Co-Chair of the Global Facilitation Group of the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, Czech Republic

Pablo Rodriguez-Bilella, 28.4.2010

Dear Daniel, Below I have pasted the translation of your message in Spanish. I would like to ask your permission for sharing it with the Latin American Evaluation Network (ReLAC), because I feel that you have made a great synthesis of different topics, and also made your own contribution.

Best wishes, Pablo

Daniel Svoboda, 28.4.2010

Pablo, feel free to share my message with anybody! And I really admire your prompt and professional translations!

Best regards, Daniel

Jean Hilburn, 28.4.2010

Dear Member,

On 7th April, we sent out an email from IDEAS and AfrEA, inviting you to participate in a virtual discussion on the following topic:

Evaluating the Paris Declaration: Challenges and Solutions

The discussion was to last a month, starting April 12, 2010 and ending May 7 2010.

Some excellent comments have been received, and the discussion is still ongoing. IDEAS President Ray Rist was particularly impressed by what he considers a brilliant piece of work received from Daniel Svoboda, IDEAS Vice President, and Co-Chair of the Global Facilitation Group of the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, Czech Republic. Ray would like to share Daniel's reflections with all of our members.

Jean Hilburn, IDEAS Administrator

Daniel Svoboda, 30.4.2010 - Week 3

Dear friends, here are my inputs to the Week 3 questions. My answers to questions 1 and 2 are merged - *What tools and methods are most suitable for measuring progress in each PD principle? How to assess the relations between the PD principles of aid effectiveness and development effectiveness principles addressed by the CSOs?*

Ownership

As described in the PD, this principle concerns local governments' ownership only which is to be measured by existence of operational development strategies. This can be a tricky and insufficient target/indicator for many reasons, for example:

- Many Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and local development programs are imposed by donors (sad example of unfair donors' behavior are 2006 elections in Palestine - all donor countries appreciated fairness and freedom of these elections but they did not like the results - so they mostly stopped the ODA money flows; this approach undermined ownership of any democratic process in the region - for years, maybe generations).
- In many countries, there were very limited (almost none) national consultations on priorities, tools and procedures of national development strategies and they often do not reach the most needed and marginalized. Therefore we can hardly speak about national ownership of national development strategies.
- Setting appropriate national priorities does not need only (still missing) transparency or open doors for discussions but, in particular, empowering people to actively participate. And building such genuine ownership is a long-term process that cannot be solved only by donors or governments.

These are the reasons why CSOs speak about democratic ownership - engaging citizens in all stages of development process (starting with policies and ending with watch-dog/evaluation roles and with consequent enforcing of recommendations and lessons learned).

Regarding tools/methods, the key issues to be measured at ownership level are relevance, effectiveness (and reach), and possible impacts. Therefore descriptive and cause-effect questions are very appropriate. Observations, case studies, surveys, focus groups and community interviews seem to be some of suitable evaluation methods.

Alignment

According to the PD, the effectiveness lies in alignment of aid channels to existing local bureaucratic structures. Donors do not take care so much of alignment of these structures to real needs and possibilities for tackling poverty, of democratic mandate of these structures or of their efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore this principle/commitment looks as a sort of alibi for donors, allowing them partially shut eyes to corruption, totalitarian practices or inability issues. On the other hand, the stress in the PD on avoiding parallel structures (hand in hand with strengthening local capacities), on predictability and untied aid is really important for all development actors, including CSOs and evaluators.

CSOs speak specially about ODA alignment to real causes of development problems and also about policy coherence. Therefore relevance of development programs and their efficiency, effectiveness and reach are important criteria. Cause-effect questions and survey and panel methods might probably be the most suitable. Censuses would then bring the best results for descriptive questions

that should well feed into cause-effect analyses. Normative questions and targets used in the PD deals only with aid efficiency and have no link to development results.

Harmonization

Harmonization of donors and program-based approaches could really improve efficiency of development aid but CSOs concern a) about a hidden agenda which might be behind division and harmonization of labor ("new colonialism" and also issue of donors' favorites and orphans) and b) about missing PD focus on multi-actors and cross-sectoral partnership schemes, based on shared visions and diverse added values. The focus on true cooperation is missing in the PD.

As harmonization deals mainly with efficiency, normative questions are appropriate; and review of official records, surveys, interviews and focus groups can help to get the right answers.

Managing for Results

Unfortunately, this principle in the PD deals in fact only with monitoring, reporting and budgeting. There is no indicator for higher objectives - outcomes and impacts. Impacts on the lives of poor people are mentioned only in a short paragraph 22 in the AAA. In addition, CSOs and other development actors are mentioned only sporadically in the PD (one remark on non-government systems and one about a broad range of development partners). The work with other development actors is more highlighted in the AAA (specific paragraphs 13, 16, 19 and 20); however their roles in development process are still neglected in practice.

CSOs are speaking about added values and complementarity of diverse actors and about their joint contribution to "the positive and negative, primary and secondary, long-term and/or significant effects in people's lives and environment produced by several interventions, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended". Another discussed issue is enabling environment provided for other actors by donors/governments to allow them to use their full development potential. From that point of view, there is still a low predictability in funding, almost no flexibility in donors' programs at activity/output level, decision-making processes take several months (sometimes years), and there is still a clear preference for quantitative indicators (with a vision "the more numbers the better"). It is really crucial to speak more about development effectiveness and impacts and moreover, not to speak only but to put the results-based approaches into practice (Dear donors, please, forget eligible or ineligible activities and let us manage our programs and projects for results and let us take also some risk of innovations and even risk of failure - otherwise there will be little or no progress).

For assessing management for results, combination of descriptive, cause-effect and normative questions is necessary as well as mix of quantitative and qualitative (participatory) methods.

Mutual Accountability

Paris declaration considers this principle from administrative point of view (the only target is a mutual assessment review). Besides insufficiency of such target (how are the results of these reviews used?), it is important to mention that donors' money is not money produced by development agencies or governments. It comes from tax payers who wish or at least accept its use for making our small world better. And tax payers wish to see the real results, not the reviews.

CSOs understand mutual accountability also as accountability to final beneficiaries and as mutual transparency, trust and predictability.

Evaluations should measure quality of cooperation (trust) and therefore participatory evaluations and qualitative methods are best appropriate. Normative questions should be then used for measuring commitments - we are definitely not looking for cause-effect answers why the commitments cannot be fulfilled but for the answers when, by whom, how and for what. And this is also the key for accountability.

Question 3 (*How can CSOs and other actors participate in PD evaluation?*) can be probably better answered by the Better Aid platform (see www.betteraid.org). I would like to personally highlight at least several aspects:

- CSOs and other development actors must take real care of development issues and must come with pro-active recommendations and own efforts whenever needed and possible;
- CSOs must also strive for direct participation in development evaluations and empower the others to get engaged. This means not being only respondents (objects) to evaluation surveys but also raising own questions and priorities;
- CSOs must call for publicly accessible "Recommendation Tracking System" and must challenge responsible authorities and other actors whenever the responsible reaction to evaluation results

is missing; in the same way, the CSOs should publish the results and responses to their own evaluations;

- CSOs must become aware that pure criticism without proposing alternative approaches and without own self-reflections can hardly lead to improvements; the Open Forum and Better Aid processes are good steps in the right direction;
- And finally, an important role of CSOs is in development awareness and development education; and it definitely includes issues of aid and development effectiveness.

Daniel Svoboda

Denis Jobin, 3.5.2010

Dear colleagues and friends, Greetings from Ottawa, Canada!!

We are entering our last week of discussion. While last week was more quite than what I expected, here are some questions that should create more reaction!! We can go back on the questions/issues of previous week of course as need be!!

Thank you for your interest and contributions!! Best regards, Denis Jobin

Week 4: Transaction costs and country systems

1. Given the fact that transaction costs (TCs) affect economic performance, to what extent have transaction costs affected the Paris Declaration effectiveness?

a) How are TCs measured and operationalized?

2. To what extent the country systems and procedures are or can be used for PD implementation and evaluation?

a) To what extent are the Paris Declaration Principles still relevant?

b) Why has progress been so slow?

c) Are aid priorities still aligned with development needs?

3. How rigorous and independent is the evaluation of the Paris Declaration?

Charles Orina, 6.5.2010

Dear Denis,

As we come to the end of our discussion, I have been wondering if the PD is not another fad, whose impact neither the donors nor the partner countries really care about as neither has ever assessed the impact of earlier poverty reduction initiatives which had been introduced with even greater enthusiasm. In my country there is already little or no reference to MDGs in public pronouncements! By 2015, we shall probably be asking what the MDGs had been all about.

Nonetheless I am happy to comment as follows in response to the week four questions:

Best regards, Charles Orina

MY COMMENTS ON WEEK FOUR QUESTIONS

Transaction Costs and the Paris Declaration effectiveness

As a proportion of total amounts of aid to a country, transaction costs are usually small and hopefully decreasing. Therefore their effect on aid effectiveness would be correspondingly limited. To the extent that aid would be aligned to a country's development plans and programmes and harmonized, the costs of human and all other resources (of both the donor and recipient countries) for the preparation, negotiation, and execution of aid agreements should be decreasing.

Measurement of Transaction Costs

Unlike in donor countries where aid staff are specific and costs of review missions are routinely budgeted, measurement of transaction costs in recipient countries is a difficult task, particularly where public service officers are involved, because it is not easy to cost their time which is spent on meetings, workshops, and preparation of reports relating to aid. However should a situation arise that would necessitate getting the transaction costs in the partner countries, then this may be done by applying the methodology which is used in calculating the cost of staff time for consultancy services.

Nonetheless this problem may be short lived because accountability and transparency considerations in the use of donor resources are likely to force the institutionalization of methodologies for measuring and monitoring transaction costs within the recipient countries sooner than later. Evaluators should facilitate and hasten this development by developing an appropriate methodology which may be adapted in the partner countries.

To what extent the country systems and procedures are or can be used for PD implementation and evaluation?

In spite of their publicly stated commitments, the donors' use of country systems and procedures is still low, at 45% for financial management and 43% for procurement by 2007. Performance on this score among the major donors shows great dispersion: From 03% for the United States to 77% for the UK under financial services; and from 05% for the USA and 68% for the UK under procurement. The 2008 Report also showed that progress on both aspects between 2005 and 2007 had been marginal.

With respect to evaluation, if we use the list of persons who participated in the production of the 2008 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration as an indication of the extent to which a country's institutions are used in evaluation, the conclusion is that the donor countries have used them to a very limited extent. The list of the National Coordinators and Donor Focal Points Organisations in recipient countries also paints a similar picture.

The low level of involving local institutions, systems, and procedures may not be justified in countries which have them in place. As I had indicated in one of my earlier contributions, many countries have undertaken wide ranging reforms in the public sector as a result of which effective national financial management and procurement systems now exist. More of the countries' systems and procedures should be used as far as possible. Where they would not be used due to capacity constraints, the recipient country and/or its institutions should be supported in filling the capacity gaps. (This is one of the fields where IDEAS should play a key role)

To what extent are the Paris Declaration Principles still relevant?

The PD Principles as further reaffirmed under the AAA are still relevant.

Why has progress been so slow?

The low rate of progress could have arisen from the apparent inadequate preparedness for the key players in both the donor and recipient countries to implement what had been agreed on. A secondary reason would be capacity constraints in the recipient countries, some of which are noted in the 2008 Report. However it appears that one of the critical causal factors for the slow progress are gaps in the implementation plans of the PD initiatives. Considering that the PD had been preceded by earlier meetings which had also come up with findings and recommendations on enhancing aid effectiveness, the low rate of performance may be due to a failure to embed in the PD an effective monitoring and evaluation system from which lessons would be learnt and, where necessary, action taken early enough to ensure that the desired rate of progress is attained and maintained. This is an area for which a robust recommendation may be volunteered by the Evaluation community to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, and the Joint Venture on Monitoring the Paris Declaration for consideration.

Are aid priorities still aligned with development needs?

There appears to be increased alignment of aid with the development needs of countries, having risen on aggregate from 48% to 60% by 2007, with many countries reporting substantial increases on this score. At the same time programme based aid had increased from 43% to 47%. Both measures indicate that aid priorities are increasingly aligned with the development needs of recipient countries, where these have been identified and reflected in their respective development plans.

Charles Orina, Nairobi, Kenya

Murad Mukhtarov, 6.5.2010

Dear colleagues,

first of all, let us express appreciation to IDEAS VP Daniel Svoboda for his excellent summary of what has been already discussed and his constructive conclusions.

After such a great representation of challenges I would like to point out the positive trends that occurred since and because of PD mainly in terms of Alignment and Harmonization.

Donors and other development partners are really improving coordination of their activities. Joint sector programming and collaboration in projects' implementation are reducing the transaction costs.

Progress in aid has been made in alignment with national development strategies. In our country, for example, no projects can be financed if they are not in the country priority list.

Of course, there are great number of challenges in implementation of PD: strengthening of ownership, limited participation of civil society, capacity building and etc.

But answering the current week question: To what extend does the Paris Declaration Principles are still relevant? I would say that PD is still a good and practical instrument but a long way is necessary to pass to satisfy all its principles.

In general, all evaluations, not only PD evaluations, should be more rigorous than they are and I am greeting the 3ie initiative being based not only on rigorousness but also on using of national institutions as principal partners.

The world financial crisis will automatically arrange all to their places. In particular, more real evaluations will be required than formal ones. And it is timely that the subject of IDEAS General Assembly to be held this year is just devoted to that topic.

Regards, Murad Mukhtarov

Hellmut Eggers, 7.5.2010

Dear Denis!

Thanks for sending me the remaining questions! Here my (A) reaction and my (B) proposal:

A. REACTION

Week 3, question 1:

If I interpret the PD correctly, it has already indicated how to measure such progress. I don't find any fault, either, with the indicators contained in the PD for that purpose. Of course, they have to be followed and quantified accordingly. But that should be done by those made responsible in the PD for that purpose. I don't believe an outside group like ours could improve on those indicators and their follow-up. What we might do, however, is to look at the follow-up reports that should have been worked out by those responsible by now and come to conclusions about the seriousness and the validity of such follow-up.

In other words: don't "re-invent" those "tools" and the "methods" by which they are applied! Judge the result of such application and come to a conclusion on whether these results appear valid, reliable and credible! In order to do that, we would have to study the evaluation reports that should have been produced (well, have they?) by the mechanism spelt out by the PD itself, and not its text!

Week 3, question 2:

It has often been said that the "spirit of officialdom" that has bred the PD and that of grass-roots CSOs are incompatible, CSOs being "much closer to the people". I have worked in European ODA officialdom for many years and I don't believe in the incompatibility of these two "spirits". We have been co-financing NGOs as a routine part of our work and I (former head of the Evaluation Division of Directorates General "Development" and "External Relations" of the European Commission) have periodically either supervised or myself undertaken evaluations of such co-financing. I do not recall that we had ever any serious divergence of views on the objectives to be pursued: help the poor help themselves, or, in more technical language: the creation of sustainable benefits for the target groups of development interventions, no matter whether financial inputs came from public bodies, NGOs/ CSOs. Whether or not such benefits were actually, or had a good chance to be, produced is quite another matter and had to be analyzed, precisely, by serious evaluations. But there were never any serious divergences as to the INTENTIONS of the officials on the one hand and the voluntary sector organizations on the other.

Week 4, first question (labeled 3.):

Operationalizing transaction costs (TC) by estimating their influence on the effectiveness of the PD seems to me a "Mission Impossible" and largely an exercise in futility (even more so as the transaction costs are marginal compared to the remaining, i.e. the main costs). Even if such an undertaking would be a practical possibility (which is not the case, in my view), what could be the possible usefulness of such enormous, time- and money consuming exercise???

Second question, (labeled 4):

Again, I feel uneasy about this question. It seems clear to me that, if one wants to know whether “country systems and procedures are or can be used for PD implementation and evaluation”, then it would be indispensable to study all of those systems and all of those procedures of all recipient countries in detail and then judge them as to their (i) actual and/or (ii) potential capacity to be used for the double purpose (implementation/evaluation) as stated in the question. Who is going to undertake such a herculean task??? Certainly not our little group! And how could the results of this mammoth study be used and by whom??? Let’s concentrate our limited strength on more worthwhile endeavors!

As to the continuing relevance of the PD Principles, it would be sad if after just 4 or 5 years they would have to undergo serious review, and to me they seem to conserve their value. If progress has been slow, I think that is due to the absence of serious, dated, controllable implementation mechanisms. And as to the question to know whether “aid priorities are still aligned with development needs”, I must confess that any “non-alignment” in that respect would leave me puzzled, confused and open-mouthed. Surely aid priorities cannot have but one, and only one purpose: to be aligned with development needs! Those responsible for defining aid priorities should constantly ensure that they are concentrated on development needs, and if they are unable to do that they should be immediately replaced by people who know their job!

Third question (labeled 5.):

If one wants to know how rigorous and independent the evaluation of the PD is, then that evaluation must have taken place and have given rise to the establishment of an evaluation report. Does such report exist? If not, the answer to this question must wait until that is the case.

B. PROPOSAL

I think that our group could make a really significant contribution to the debate on the PD/AAA evaluation, if we undertook to fill in what seems to me the most important gap in these texts: True, the importance of formulating “Assessment Frameworks” has been underlined in the PD, but there is no further allusion to this decisive instrument!!! I propose that our group undertake to establish the general pattern such documents would have to present. In other words, we should try to formulate a “Master Assessment Framework” (MAF) that could be taken by all as the starting point for the establishment of more specific, country (or sector) oriented “Assessment Frameworks”. Such exercise would have the decisive advantage of concentrating planners’ and evaluators’ minds on the issues that really matter in development promotion; allowing all, moreover and at last (!), to start speaking a “common language”. May I mention, in passing, that the MAF would treat, inter alia, all of the really important issues that have come up during the debate held by our group so far, like gender issues, the role and mission of CSOs (and NGOs in general), etc...

The “Master Assessment Framework” (MAF) would have to present a triple thrust: It should:

- (a) be concentrated on the objective that ALL development interventions should have in common: Poverty alleviation/elimination, or, in more technical language: the creation of sustainable benefits for their target groups.
- (b) incorporate the essential general lessons taught by past experience, as formulated by evaluations, while simultaneously not only allowing but positively encouraging the taking into consideration of the specific characteristics and circumstances making each individual development intervention the unique case it is.
- (c) ensure, by its parallel structuring of planning and evaluation, that new lessons becoming available through evaluation are being incorporated into planning, thus making operational feedback a matter of operational routine and guaranteeing that the MAF itself will always be kept up to date.

I would be prepared, dear Denis, to work out a draft for the MAF (ideally one page, but under no circumstances more than two), to be submitted to our group for critical comment and corresponding improvement. However, as I positively HATE to work “for the record”, (i.e. for nothing), before establishing that draft I should want to be sure that it will provoke real professional interest among our group’s members. I should, therefore, like to ask you a favor: Please, dear Denis, circulate this message and ask the group for a “show of hands” of volunteers that would be prepared to enter into the above mentioned debate with the objective of producing a “Master Assessment Framework” destined to be taken into consideration by those that should, according to the PD, establish Assessment Frameworks for their countries. I suggest that you send me the names of those volunteers, and I give you a formal undertaking that I will produce the draft as soon as we have

identified the first 10 “volunteers”, not sooner and not later. If that figure cannot be reached, we'll forget about my present proposal.

Fair enough?

Yours faithfully, Hellmut

Daniel Svoboda, 8.5.2010

Dear Charles, Murad, Hellmut and others,

Thank you very much for your contributions, in fact I must agree with most of your comments! In order to stay focused, I link my comments to the individual questions.

Week 3

What tools and methods are most suitable for measuring progress in each PD principle?

I agree with Hellmut there is no need to “re-invent the tools” and there are both many agreed indicators and tools already applied in PD evaluations. There is also truth that the first phase of PD evaluation focused on the implementation of inputs and outputs associated with the Paris Declaration, while the second phase should focus on the intended and unintended development outcomes and results that can be attributed to the aid effectiveness agenda of the Paris Declaration. With this intention, three sets of evaluation questions have been proposed for the second stage of PD evaluation:

- What are the Paris Declaration “configurations,” how were they decided and are they appropriate, i.e. are they well adapted to country circumstances and aid scenarios? (This set of questions was the main focus of the Phase 1 Evaluation);
- How have governments, donors and civil society used Paris Declaration partnership arrangements – and with what discernable added value? (This set of questions overlaps the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Evaluations; and the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness is one of the concrete responses);
- Is the Paris Declaration the best way to achieve the kinds of identified outcomes and results? Are there other strategies that could achieve the same results more effectively and efficiently? (The third set of questions concerns the extent to which the Paris Declaration can be said to be the most appropriate policy or strategy to achieve poverty reduction and broader development results; and this is also the key concern of the Open Forum and I believe that also of IDEAS and other evaluation associations).

Once again, the key issue for all evaluations is the use of the lessons learned. Therefore, the PD evaluations should not only measure whether the PD is implemented in a right way or can be implemented better but also whether the PD is the right and sufficient solution (the evaluations should also assess the relevance and alternative theories how the envisaged impacts can be reached).

How to assess the relations between the PD principles of aid effectiveness and development effectiveness principles addressed by the CSOs?

There is a wide consensus among CSOs that the PD is a very good step forward (if responsibly applied) but not sufficient for making the significant changes in people lives happen. I do not see incompatibility but still insufficient complementarity and insufficient mutual trust.

I totally agree with Hellmut that all development actors should have the same aim/goal and many (most of them) probably do have. On the other hand, I would challenge some (activity and output driven) objectives of official donor programs but also of many projects proposed and introduced by other actors. Therefore the CSOs are calling within the Open Forum process for more flexibility at activity level and at the same time for an increased joint responsibility at outcome and impact level. They also wish to build more responsible and open partnerships among various development actors, genuine partnerships that respect mutual and shared accountability and also diversity and complementarity of partners.

Week 4

1. Given the fact that transaction costs (TCs) affect economic performance, to what extent have transaction costs affected the Paris Declaration effectiveness?

a) How are TCs measured and operationalized?

I also believe that PD principles should lead to decreasing transaction costs (while improving the results) and there are definitely tools how to measure these costs (like for example timesheets for describing engagement of local development actors) but Hellmut raised very relevant question whether such measurement might really help to increase effectiveness or would become only another bureaucracy requirement with no real use.

2. To what extent the country systems and procedures are or can be used for PD implementation and evaluation?

a) To what extent does the Paris Declaration Principles are still relevant?

b) Why has progress been so slow?

c) Are aid priorities still aligned with development needs?

Key question related to use of country system is not only their current capacity but, in particular, needs for capacity building and nurturing (but it concerns also donor countries!). From my point of view, the best capacity building and learning is by doing. So the country systems must be used in practice, even with the risk of failures, which anyhow can be the best learning tool. Unfortunately, the preliminary data say there has been a very limited improvement...

PD principles are definitely still relevant. But not sufficient.

The progress is slow mainly because of limited ownership of most of the actors. And the ownership is further undermined by empty commitments that are not operationalized in practice.

Regarding alignment of aid priorities with development needs, I am not so optimistic. An important question is who decides about the priorities - donors' officials, partner countries' governments (individually or jointly), citizens? Decentralization of aid programs partially helps (if there is enough expertise, transparency, reach and access). But there are many questionable "fashion" priorities of donor programs, e.g. bio-fuels (without considering impact on agriculture, landscape or food security), renewable energy sources (without considering whole life cycle assessment and specific contexts) or climate change (with an ambitious aim to rule the planet but probably with less stress, understanding and respect for nature laws and sustainable development principles). There is also still a low attention to cross-sectoral issues. Other problems are linked to tied aid, inflated aid and aid conditionalities.

3. How rigorous and independent is the evaluation of the Paris Declaration?

There is an official Synthesis report on the first phase of the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration (see e.g. http://www.diiis.dk/graphics/Subweb/paris_evaluation_web/index.htm) and there are other reports on country level evaluations that bring interesting findings and important recommendations. The question is still the same - how the results will be used in the second phase and beyond.

Hellmut's Proposal

I fully support Hellmut's proposal and I am volunteering to enter into the debate!

Finally, I would like to thank all active participants of the IDEAS/AFREA virtual conference and I believe that our communication will continue and will bring valuable inputs for real improvements of aid/development architecture and for results (impact) driven evaluations.

With best regards, Daniel Svoboda

Charles Orina, 8.5.2010

Dear Daniel,

Thanks for your illuminating comments on PD evaluations.

As a follow up I wish to comment on your observations that the PD is a very good step forward but not sufficient for making the significant changes in people lives happen and, secondly, that aid priorities are not optimally aligned with development needs.

The fact that the PD is not sufficient for making significant changes in peoples' lives in spite of the huge amounts of resources that have been spent over time is largely a consequence of insufficient alignment of the aid with the real needs of the people for whom the aid is sought and/or given. In turn this is a consequence of needs assessment processes which exclude the intended beneficiaries from participation and providing inputs from them. An important question therefore is who SHOULD decide

about the priorities? It should be the Citizens through adequately resourced community based organisations and on this basis evaluation questions should also seek to establish not only the role but also the extent of participation by Community Based Organisations (CBO) in the identification and prioritization of their needs as well as in the evaluations of the implementation of aid programmes/projects and their results at all levels.

In concluding my contribution in this discussion, I wish to add the following views:

- In our comments so far there has been little reference to research as a source of the information that will guide the evaluators' programmes in strengthening their profession. Evaluators should be more proactive in this aspect.
- Finally, risk management in the public sector is becoming an important tool for ensuring that the objectives of an intervention are achieved. It is therefore an aspect that should interest evaluators.

Best regards, Charles Orina

Hellmut Eggers, 9.5.2010

Dear Daniel, dear Colleagues!

Thanks a lot for your kind words and your stimulating message, dear Daniel! As we grow in understanding the complexity of Development and international cooperation, we might be torn between hopelessness (just give up, it's simply too difficult!!!) and stubborn determination (yes, we can, let's further improve and fight!).

Thanks also for your kind offer to respond positively to my "Proposal", dear Daniel! You are the first on the list that I hoped would reach a minimum number of 10 participants! That was maybe too optimistic? Anyway, it is quality and not quantity that counts...

So, if no one else will join the list, I'll send my draft of a "Master Assessment Framework" (MAF) simply to Daniel alone (if there are others who volunteer, to them as well, of course). I am far from pretending that such MAF is any "big deal". I do think however, that it has useful potential and is worthwhile looking at for a start. And that is all I would expect from those "joining the list".

So, I repeat my (very simple) proposal: I will send my MAF draft to all those members of our group who volunteer to have a critical look at it (and first of all to you, of course, dear Daniel).

All the best! Hellmut

Gert Danielsen, 10.5.2010

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings from UNDP's Regional Centre in Panamá. I hope you are well.

Thank you for the fascinating discussion. As you know, UNDP's Aid Effectiveness Team works globally to support Paris Declaration implementation, and we would very much like to welcome you all to our Multi-Stakeholder Community of Practice (COP), where we discuss and exchange ideas around development finance effectiveness through weekly digests and an online forum.

To become a member of the Multi-Stakeholder Community of Practice on Aid Effectiveness (MS COP-AE), please send a BLANK e-mail (not even including a signature) to join-aideffect-ms@groups.dev-nets.org.

We look forward to welcoming you all. Yours, Gert Danielsen, UNDP's COP-AE Moderator

Denis Jobin, 10.5.2010

Dear Colleagues,

Following many offline requests, we (the project team) would like to extend for an additional week the discussion on the challenges and solutions in evaluating the Paris Declaration.

As a reminder - the themes for the discussion are:

- Evaluation Quality
- Challenges and opportunities
- Appropriate tools and methods

- Transaction costs and country systems

Please visit this site to see previous messages/posts from this group:

http://cf.groups.yahoo.com/group/Paris_Declaration_Evaluation/messages

Let keep going this interesting discussion!!!

Best ... Denis Jobin

Charles Orina, 12.5.2010

Dear Denis,

I wish to revisit some aspects which relate to the discussion questions and responses over the past four weeks on the PD Evaluations:

- **Reliable and Sufficient Statistics:** The first issue is the data and information on which evaluations at all levels are based because the quality of any evaluation will be as good as the data on which it is based. A major consideration therefore is to ascertain the availability, accessibility, and quality of data; measure this against the requirements for a proper evaluation and then determine how the gap, if any, may be bridged. In spite of limitations that may arise from Terms of Reference for evaluations, evaluators should make recommendations relating to the strengthening of the national data collection and processing agencies and systems in the recipient countries.
- **Building/Strengthening Internal Capacities of Recipient Countries:** There is need for greater focus on the implications for the principles of ownership and use of the countries' individuals and institutions in the design and implementation of the aid funded projects because it should be implied that the development of any country includes the strengthening of its capacities in these areas, among others. This is therefore a key area on which aid effectiveness should also be assessed. Whereas the donor countries and/or agencies have moved fast to harmonize their approaches to development assistance, as part of the Accra Agenda for Action, the recipient countries may not have moved in tandem to strengthen their capacities for enhancing aid effectiveness. Through evaluations, lapses may be identified and appropriate courses of action recommended.
- **Affirmative Action:** The PD evaluation also provides an opportunity for evaluators from donor countries to aid in the capacity strengthening process by partnering with and guiding interested evaluators from recipient countries who may be less experienced. As pointed out earlier by Daniel, learning by doing is the most effective way acquiring competences.
- **Benefiting from work already Done in improving the Evaluation Practice.** It has been brought out that most aid agencies have been improving their tools for managing developing assistance, including its evaluation. One Agency has even included story telling as an officially accepted evaluation tool that may be used alongside existing ones. We should therefore take note of these developments as we address the difficulties that may be faced in undertaking PD evaluations.

Best regards to all those who have made this discussion possible and the colleagues from whose experiences and comments I have learnt a lot.

Charles Orina, Nairobi, Kenya

Daniel Svoboda, 16.5.2010

Dear all,

I appreciate very much our consensus on many issues linked to the Evaluations of Paris Declaration. I wish to mention at least three of them:

- We must focus on **people-centered approaches**, using all standard and innovative tools for evaluating and promoting real impacts on people's lives.
- All key development actors including evaluators must be **more proactive** - evaluators must make recommendations!
- There is a necessity of **strengthening local ownership and full participation**, by using "**mutual learning by doing**" approaches for enhancing both competencies and potential for cooperation and for a shared responsibility for results. There is a bulk of knowledge/experience among local actors and it must be used.

Based on the above points, evaluations of the PD and AAA should work with questions and methods that concern and include people (not only structures, papers and numbers). Thus the story telling mentioned by Charles Orina, case studies and also experimental and quasi-experimental designs can be well used, among others. In any case, we must work with reliable data and I believe that evaluators should also assess what kind of statistic data is needed to measure development problems, priorities and impacts. They must be also ready to propose new targets, indicator frameworks and statistics for development strategies and for development evaluations when needed. Let us pilot this approach on Hellmut's proposal of "Master Assessment Framework".

Secondly, **frank and open communication** among all development actors is probably the most urgent challenge:

- All of us must learn not only to clearly formulate our opinions and ideas but, in particular, to **listen to the others, respect diverse positions** and think about them without prejudice.
- It is necessary to facilitate **consensus on common priorities** and to build communication on these priorities first; dealing with controversial or complicated issues usually needs more time, empathy and patience.
- **New style of communication** (of participation) must start since programming/strategy setting stage - evaluations can hardly measure what does not exist and people can hardly influence and adopt development strategies by reading them (or evaluation reports) only.

By the way, there is an attempt within the European Union to revive the idea of a "structured dialogue" among different development actors. The recent EU consultation process, called also Quadriologue, includes the European Commission, European Parliament, and European Member States at "governmental" level, and Non-State Actors: CSOs and local authorities. Let us see the results and lessons learned...

Finally, I would like to stress that Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action mean a unique **opportunity for promoting development effectiveness principles** in all fields of our development work and life. Let us use it!

Thanks again to all who constructively contributed to our discussion, with clear own statements and also with open minds!

With best regards, Daniel Svoboda

James Wagala, 18.5.2010

Dear Hellmut, Denis and the rest of the team,

I have been following the discussions on this group and I must admit a lot of interesting ideas have been shared. I am really excited at the future of evaluation of the PD, AAA and other declarations aimed at strengthening aid effectiveness.

I am wondering if it is too late to raise my hands up to Hellmut's proposal of a MAF. I think this MAF once completed would form a robust foundation for future evaluation of the PD and the AAA.

Regards, James Wagala

Abdoul Diallo, 18.5.2010

Dear Colleagues,

The discussion has now reached an end. Many discussions have been made, and ideas shared among. You can access posts archives here:

http://cf.groups.yahoo.com/group/Paris_Declaration_Evaluation/

We would like to take this opportunity to take few minutes to answer this survey so we can assess the relevance and effectiveness of the discussions on Paris Declaration Evaluation: Challenges and Solutions. Click on the link below until Monday May 24, 2010.

Survey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TYL5M7G> (make sure to copy and paste entire link)

Abdoul Diallo on behalf of the PD project Team, Thank you - AD

Luis Gomez Calcaño, 19.5.2010

Dear organizers and participants,

Thank you for an enlightening experience. I am new to the field of evaluation and international aid, and the discussion was tremendously useful for me as an introduction to the field by some of its most experienced practitioners.

Luis Gomez Calcaño, Centro de Estudios del Desarrollo, CENDES, Universidad Central de Venezuela

Murad Mukhtarov, 20.5.2010

Dear colleagues,

Let's say thank you to the principal organizer of PD e-workshop Denis.

Regards, Murad Mukhtarov

Denis Jobin, 20.5.2010

Thank you my dear Murad, your enthusiasm and support with IDEAS projects is well known and you are certainly an important 'asset' to IDEAS and the evaluation community; I look forward to work with you. Once this said, this event (http://cf.groups.yahoo.com/group/Paris_Declaration_Evaluation/) would not have been possible without Florence Etta (actual President of Afrea and IDEAS board member) who shared her idea of launching such event with myself and Oumou Bah Tall in Johannesburg in 2009.

Also the success of this event is ensured by Daniel Svoboda, IDEAS Vice-President, who made thoughtful contributions to the discussion and with his assistance in planning the event.

I wish also to thank Pablo who took care of the Spanish volet of the event by translating in an incredible short time the discussions and posts.

And finally to Abdou Diallo, a Senegalese and Canadian living in Canada and working for Statistic Canada here in Ottawa who designed the survey and analysis of the results. He is also eager to work back in development evaluation and to bring his precious skills to this community; I wish him best!

And I would like to thank all participants for their contribution and interest.

Wish you all the best, Cheers – Denis