



EFFECTIVENESS TO IMPACT

Study on the application of the effectiveness principles

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ACRONYMS

DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DG DEVCO	European Commission’s Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development
DPs	Development Partners
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Viruses
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. KEY FINDINGS

What's the big idea? Nearly 15 years ago in Paris, the international community recognised that development assistance could and should work better and decided that applying a certain set of principles – later condensed into ownership, focusing on results, inclusive partnerships, and transparency and accountability – was the best way to do it. These principles soon became synonymous with effective development, the assumption being that applying them would undoubtedly lead to better results. Subsequent work tended to focus on if they had been applied or not rather than whether that application led to the predicted benefits. This assumption has been increasingly challenged in recent years however. While everyone still wants development cooperation that delivers, the question is whether the principles are fit for purpose. To try to answer it, the EU commissioned a study in the first half of 2019, looking at whether applying the principles on the ground has really led to better results.

How did we go about it? Dedicated consultants looked at several hundred studies, evaluations and pieces of research, both at the macro level and on individual projects and programmes to see where the principles had been applied and what effect this had had. These were sourced from international organisations, bilateral DPs, partner country governments, CSOs, academia and think tanks. They were geographically balanced and covered a range of sectors, though placed a special emphasis on the SDGs for education, decent work, reduced inequalities and climate action.

What did we find? Overall the principles definitely do seem to make a difference and where they are applied we see better results. For example:

All of the principles can be embodied in ***budget support*** given that it lines up work behind national policies and results as well as using country systems. And the research shows that it works, leading to increased public spending and access to public services, especially for education and health, better public financial management, and strengthened domestic accountability. For example, in Timor Leste, it improved government capacity to undertake reforms, in Ghana it helped with responding to economic shocks, in Nicaragua it improved accountability, and in Zambia it contributed to an economic turnaround. These kinds of benefits have not been matched when the same amounts are spent using other aid modalities.

Inclusive ***ownership*** of policy and plans was found to be key to success in many cases. For example, in Cambodia, government improved protection services for those living with HIV by giving them a role in designing new support programmes. In the Pacific, tapping into local knowledge and concerns and giving local people a role in implementation was crucial to the impact of initiatives to improve weather forecasts and alerts, facilitating faster and more comprehensive evacuations. In Afghanistan, putting together a nationally-owned education plan meant the country could gain access to funding from the Global Partnership for Education.

A range of studies flag that ***fragmentation*** of development assistance impairs results, leading to gaps, overlaps, missed collaboration opportunities and a higher cost of doing business. It is an issue

that is becoming even more pressing as additional providers of support come on stream and work increasingly outside of central governments. This means better joining up work can make a real difference. For example, introducing a nationally-owned social cash transfer programme in Malawi and requiring DPs to align to it turned around previous poor results from multiple stand-alone initiatives and saw beneficiaries increasing investment in agricultural assets. A sector wide approach in education in Nepal led to it outshining other sectors while in Cambodia it contributed to a doubling of the number of children completing lower secondary school. In Rwanda, government requirements for DPs to specialise under a division of labour led to greater focus, higher impacts, and lower administration costs, with an added benefit being that civil servants had more time to focus on their core business.

The evidence shows that good **partnerships** are essential for bringing in more resources, increasing impact, and establishing checks and balances. For example, in Nigeria, government and DPs struck a deal with the private sector to purchase agricultural outputs before working with farmers to deliver the goods, benefiting over 20,000 of them. In Pakistan, the government paid private schools to accept those who couldn't afford the fees, allowing half a million marginalised children to get access to education. In several African countries, civil society partnered with governments and DPs under an EU programme to promote responsible mining, ensuring that economic benefits did not come at the expense of social and environmental costs.

A wide range of examples see **transparency and good data** helping to show who needs assistance, enable decision-makers to see where their support is working and where it's not, and incentivise responsible behaviour by providers. For example, in Brazil, a network of civil society and private sector actors analysed the needs of hundreds of individual communities which led to a significant shift in priorities and targets by government and other development actors. In Cambodia, the ID Poor system established by government and DPs identified those at risk of being left behind, with government then mandating that all providers of support use it to target beneficiaries. In Indonesia, data was used to expose leakage in subsidised rice programmes and design more robust successors.

A lack of **predictability** is consistently flagged by partner governments as one of the top impediments to effective support and, for ultimate beneficiaries, it is often the main source of their vulnerability. For example, a lack of predictability in education funding in Zambia was cited as the main impediment to progress, hindering planning and forcing short-term teacher hires which impaired learning. On the other hand, the Public Safety Nets programme in Ethiopia emphasised the importance of providing predictable cash transfers which could be counted on in terms of timing and size. These proved highly effective in preventing distress migration while at the same time helping re-establish faith in the state.

Focusing on **results** may sound obvious but often the attention is on the wrong ones, comes too late, or is overshadowed by reporting on how much money has been spent. For example, education outcomes have been improved in several countries by focusing on literacy instead of enrolment thanks to the recognition that concentrating only on the former can lead to overstuffed classrooms and deteriorating learning. In Myanmar, the results of fisheries programmes are monitored in real time and used to shape the evolution of activities, as opposed to only appearing in an evaluation

after work has been completed. Paying for results has helped incentivise progress in many countries, such as by helping meet exam pass targets in Ethiopia and Pakistan. And publicising results has been key to establishing trust and persuading marginalised families to join Brazil's flagship social protection programme.

So what's not to like? The principles do work, and the study provides plenty of examples of this, but only when they are applied right. This does not always happen. By nature, the principles are broad, allowing perhaps too much room for interpretation. This can result in the establishment of structures and processes intended to further effectiveness that turn out to have little practical usefulness. This explains the onset of development effectiveness fatigue, as in its name people are hounded into participating in initiatives that are not making development either deliver more or cost less. Another round of generic insurances on the importance of the principles will not help. Instead, the focus now needs to be on exactly how to implement their laudable yet vague ambitions on the ground. To reclaim momentum and legitimacy, there is a need to acknowledge and learn from past failures as well as successes, moving away from the glossy, public relations, all-is-good model of development cooperation reporting that tends to prevail at international conferences. Crucially, specific examples of what works and what doesn't need to be made much more accessible – the knowledge is out there but far too much of it remains locked up in lengthy documents that are rarely read. The emerging field of devtech offers an intriguing opportunity to crack this problem and mine what we already have. This will allow us to forge the missing link between sourcing the resources and leveraging them to meet the SDGs. It's high time to take back ownership of what development effectiveness really means.

2. OBJECTIVES

The 2005 High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness saw donors, multilateral agencies, and partner-country governments sign up to the Paris Declaration. This set out a series of precepts that they agreed to follow to make aid deliver better results on the ground, which it was said were distilled from fifty years' experience of development cooperation. At a subsequent High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011 in Busan, these precepts were moulded by a wider group of development stakeholders into four principles of development effectiveness:

- Ownership of development priorities by developing countries
- Focus on results
- Inclusive development partnerships
- Transparency and accountability to each other

Since the Paris Declaration, monitoring of the principles has generally focused on whether they have been applied or not rather than whether that application has subsequently led to improved development results. In addition, the focus on them has somewhat waned in recent years (ODI, 2016) as attention has become more centred on the substantial changes to the development landscape including new providers of finance coming to the fore and the advent of a new set of ambitious global targets, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As such, it now seems an opportune time to revisit the purported link between the principles and development results,

examining the theory of change that is implied and, crucially, whether evidence from partner countries validates it. This is what this Study seeks to do. Its conclusions should enable decision-makers to determine whether there is a case for further emphasising the principles going forward and according them a central position in efforts to meet the SDGs.

The global and specific objectives of the Study are given in the Terms of Reference for the assignment as follows:

Global Objective

- “Determine the relevance of development effectiveness principles for achieving better results in addressing development challenges and achieving development outcomes (currently defined by the SDGs).”

Specific Objectives

- “Review relevant academic and research literature and development cooperation reports, including sectoral reports, to gather evidence on the impact that the application of development effectiveness principles has had in delivering better development results.
- Carry out analysis of selected evaluations of programs and projects to assess whether there is evidence of a positive impact of development effectiveness principles on development results.
- Review the extent to which application of development effectiveness principles contributed to address development challenges and achieving development outcomes (currently defined by the SDGs).
- Draw up conclusions on the impact of development effectiveness principles on the achievement of better results in development cooperation in general and by sector (in particular in relation to their contribution to achieving SDG 4 “quality education”, SDG 8 “decent work and economic growth”, SDG 10 “reduce inequalities” and SDG 13 “climate action”).”

3. METHODOLOGY

As per the specific objectives above, the Study reviews relevant reports, evaluations and analysis that have been carried out in this area, both of a general or sectoral nature and those focusing on specific projects and programmes. These were sourced by drawing up a list of organisations that experience indicated might have authored or commissioned such material, including donors, multilateral organisations, think tanks, civil society, academia and others. Their respective websites were then consulted to search for relevant documents. Consultations were also held with colleagues from the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and UNDP’s Effective Development Cooperation Development Impact Group on additional potential material. In addition, a general web search was undertaken on each principle/SDG combination as well as looking at specific sites focused on each sector and principle, where these existed. Finally, an enquiry was sent by the EU to key Development Partners (DPs) to ask them to submit relevant material. A complete list of the documents which the Study draws on is available in the Bibliography.

The Study begins by explaining the meaning of, and rationale behind, each principle, setting out both its theoretical link to development results and its relevance for the SDGs. This is followed by the main body which looks at each of the four focus SDGs in turn and considers the linkage between the

application of the principles in the sector and the achievement of development results. It should be noted that, while SDGs 4 and 13 are well delineated in sectoral terms, SDGs 8 and 10 are more wide-ranging and thus, to facilitate meaningful analysis, the Study focuses on employment generation and trade for SDG 8 and social protection for SDG 10, as previously agreed with the EU and flagged in the Inception Report.

Each of the four principles has individual focus areas that were defined by the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation's (GPEDC) second High-Level meeting in Nairobi as follows:

Ownership of development priorities by developing countries

- Formulation of an inclusive national development strategy
- Harmonisation and alignment of DPs' support
- Strengthening and use of country systems
- Parliamentary scrutiny of development cooperation

Focus on results

- Support the development of and use of country-level results frameworks (which can be at the national or sectoral level)

Inclusive development partnerships

- Inclusion of civil society, the private sector, and philanthropists together with government and donors in policy making and resource allocation decisions and in the planning and implementation of development cooperation

Transparency and accountability

- Gathering and using of open data on development cooperation
- Establishment of mutual accountability mechanisms
- Predictability of resource flows
- Transparency and accessibility of public expenditure information

While each principle is covered below for each of the four focus SDGs, not all ten focus areas are included for each. This is due both to length constraints and availability of evidence. Additionally, the principles "Focus on Results" and "Transparency and Accountability" are treated together given that they are tightly intertwined.

Wherever available, statistics have been included to back up conclusions. There is however an inherent difficulty in attributing direct causality from the application of a given principle to the achievement of development results, given the lack of control situations where all other factors were maintained constant while one of the principles was applied. It is also not possible to amalgamate findings across projects and programmes to give consolidated statistics due to the heterogeneity of the examples involved. This was recognised and highlighted in the Inception Report and also confirmed during consultations with the OECD and UNDP.

One key additional constraint was that much existing analysis focuses on whether the principles have been applied or not, as opposed to whether that application contributed to development results. For example, a dedicated evaluation of Sweden's implementation of the Paris Commitments

states “The evaluation deals with the Swedish implementation of the Paris Agenda, not with its effects” (Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation, 2010, p.ii), while an evaluation of EU Joint Programming admits in its introduction that it “will not assess results for final beneficiaries” (ADE, 2017, p.4).

At the end of the Study, a short section considers three other principles which it is posited could be of value in making development cooperation more effective. Finally, a concluding section summarises overall findings.

Case studies of particular note are highlighted in yellow below with hyperlinks to evidence provided directly in-line in the text, as well as in the Bibliography. For other case studies, hyperlinks are provided only in the Bibliography, in line with standard referencing practice.

4. THE PRINCIPLES

4.1 Ownership

The **principle of ownership** is that developing countries themselves should decide what their priorities are for national development and how these should be addressed. Such an approach implies that providers of development assistance then line up behind these priorities as opposed to setting their own. The first argument for promoting ownership is that it should work better in achieving social and economic results because partner countries tend to know their own needs and context best - as the German Development Institute emphasise, “development cooperation...can only be successful when it follows their [the partner country’s] vision, priorities and timing for change” (Janus & Keijzer, 2016, p.2) – and because collective action by external resource providers behind an agreed agenda tends to be more efficient and effective than each going off in their own direction. The second reason for promoting ownership is that it confers more legitimacy on external support as it is delivered behind partner country priorities rather than according to the whim of unelected providers, a “development result” in and of itself in that it reinforces democracy and governance, two concepts that the SDGs strongly endorse. As mentioned above, the GPEDC’s second High-Level Meeting in Nairobi in 2016 spelt out a number of focus areas for ownership, namely formulation of an inclusive national development strategy, harmonisation and alignment of DPs’ support, strengthening and use of country systems, and parliamentary scrutiny of development cooperation. Each of these is covered in turn below.

The concept of an **inclusive national development strategy** means that the partner country government does not set the strategy on its own but rather does so in partnership with other national stakeholders, both to act as a democratic check and balance on its power - recognising that not all governments are necessarily benign, well-functioning, or will act in their citizens’ best interests by default - and to ensure that the strategy responds to the real needs of citizens. The SDGs, despite agreeing common global goals, also stress the importance of each country deciding which of them it will prioritise and setting out its own path to meet them, tailored to local circumstances and in consultation with national stakeholders.

Such inclusiveness of planning is key if the SDG’s aspiration of leaving no one behind is to be met - those groups who have previously been marginalised need to be given a role in setting policy to ensure that their exclusion does not persist in future. This was the case in the Cambodian example

which is referenced in the social protection section below. In Phnom Penh, DPs worked with the Government to organise a national consultation on a HIV-sensitive approach to the sector which invited civil society and people living with HIV to design new services that would meet their needs, ultimately leading to more efficient and effective support from the state (UNDP, 2014). Work by the Overseas Development Institute has shown that countries that have made significant progress in tackling inequalities have indeed prioritised such inclusive policy making (ODI, 2016). Following an inclusive approach does however take more time and effort than governments acting unilaterally and will involve making trade-offs in negotiations with different interest groups. This is also an issue for DPs who may have priorities set by their headquarters that are at odds with those of the partner country or need to balance strengthening the state with increasing its accountability to its own citizens (Webster et al., 2018).

Partner countries will not be able to implement such inclusive national strategies through domestic resource mobilisation alone, as the Addis Ababa Agreement on Financing Sustainable Development recognises. Rather, very substantial additional financing will be needed given the ambition of the SDGs. This additional financing is far in excess of what traditional DPs alone can provide however, and so a good deal of it will need to come from the range of new public and private sector actors that have emerged in the field of development financing in recent years (Blampied, 2016). While more actors providing support means more potential funding, diversity, and choice, the risk of **fragmentation** is also increased. This is a problem that has already been experienced with traditional DPs' aid where it has been characterised as "perhaps the largest cause of inefficiency" (Janus & Keijzer, 2016, p.2) with gaps, overlaps, and increased transaction and administration costs significantly impairing aid's potential to reduce poverty in partner countries (Vollmer, 2012). Such fragmentation can be addressed by external providers of support joining up their work – harmonising - and aligning it to national plans. This should allow synergies and economies of scale to be created, gaps and overlaps to be avoided, and significant time and effort to be saved by partner countries in managing cooperation given that there will be fewer, larger initiatives to oversee.

In practice, partner country governments may seek to promote **harmonisation** and **alignment** by creating programmes at the sector or sub-sector level that they then ask individual providers of support to contribute to in what is referred to as a sector-wide or programme-based approach (the exact definition varies from country to country) (Leiderer et al., 2012, p.26). This is as opposed to each provider setting up their own bilateral initiatives. In Nepal for example, support to education has "demonstrated better results compared to other sectors as a result of resource harmonisation" (National Planning Commission, 2017, p.iv). In Cambodia, moving to a sector wide approach and coordinating investments behind a common plan is reported to have led to a doubling in the number of children reaching the last year of lower secondary school (Engle & Rose, 2011). While such joint approaches have been shown to have significant potential, care must also be taken to ensure that they do not involve overly cumbersome transaction costs due for example to each contributing partner demanding that their own particular conditions and reporting methodologies are adhered to.

Another way to promote harmonisation and alignment is to ask providers of support to specialise. In Rwanda, Government-led **division of labour** has seen each DP asked to focus their support on a small number of sectors with the result that overall impact is said to have increased as resources

have been more concentrated, while administration and transaction costs have decreased which has allowed civil servants to focus more on their core business ([Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2013](#)). **Joint programming** pushes division of labour from the DP side, normally involving a subset of them such as the EU and its Member States. These DPs agree a common response strategy to the national plan and then divide up its delivery between them in a coordinated fashion. The use of this approach has been correlated with improved development results in Lao (EU, 2018) and Cambodia (EU, 2019).

Alignment can also allow a partner country to try out new approaches that it would consider too risky to finance alone. In Senegal for example, Belgium supported the Government to design and pilot a new type of health insurance service to the rural poor with only a limited risk to public funds for what was an experimental approach. This proved to be a success, increasing health insurance coverage and the utilisation of primary care facilities, and provided the justification for domestic resources to then be used for a wider rollout (Bossyns et al., 2017).

As a study by the German Development Institute recognises, “public finance management is one of the core tasks of the public administration in any modern state...besides legislation and regulation, it is mainly through the allocation of public resources...that governments are able to foster economic growth and human development” and therefore “sound public financial management is essential if poverty in developing countries is to be effectively reduced” (Leiderer et al., 2012, p.2). In other words, good quality country systems have a direct link to development results. Channelling support through such **government systems** helps enhance state legitimacy as opposed to establishing parallel service delivery machinery that can undermine it. Such channelling normally comes along with support for strengthening those same systems which has knock-on effects for the delivery of the whole of the Government budget and thus public service provision across the board. This is especially important in fragile states where external support that avoids these institutions has been found to actually exacerbate fragility in the long run (OECD, 2014). Developing strong, accountable public institutions is also one of the targets of SDG 16.

The SDGs recognise the importance of national **parliaments** in “ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments” given that “more than any other state officials, parliamentarians have a direct relationship to the public through their role as elected representatives ...[which] provides an invaluable opportunity to promote domestic accountability for SDG achievement” (Devaux & Rodrigues, 2016, p.7). This role should extend to scrutinising external providers of support, given that such support is supposed to be part and parcel of a national development strategy. This in line with the inclusive ownership concept outlined above. Parliamentary scrutiny can help ensure that unelected providers deliver it in a responsible and accountable way and that the alignment and harmonisation mentioned above happen in practice. In Myanmar for example, parliament began to scrutinise loans from DPs and pushed back on some due to concerns about government taking on unsustainable levels of debt for the country. Providers themselves should welcome such scrutiny as it encapsulates the kind of democratic state-building that they have committed to in SDG 16. In general however, the study has found little available evidence on the results achieved from parliamentary scrutiny in practice and, as such, it is an area where more primary research is recommended.

The **principle of ownership** is thus of relevance to the first 15 SDGs, which deal with social and economic development, environmental sustainability, rights, and governance, in that it stands to deliver better results on all of these issues by improving how external support is delivered while also widening national guidance of that support beyond the executive. It is also of relevance to SDG 16 in terms of institution building and to SDG 17 which promotes partnership in that it aims to bring all actors together behind national plans and systems.

4.2 Inclusive Development Partnerships

As noted above, domestic resources plus traditional DP funds will simply not be enough to reach the SDGs and thus new sources of external support need to be utilised including those from the private sector, philanthropists, and civil society. As mentioned in the “ownership” section, care is needed to ensure that these do not tread on one another’s toes, which can be helped by using programme-based approaches, division of labour and joint programming for example. However, **innovative partnerships** are needed beyond these approaches to leverage the distinct comparative advantages of each actor in both policy making and implementation to ensure that, together, they achieve more than the sum of their parts, which will be essential if the SDGs are to be met (Blampied, 2016).

The **private sector** is a particularly important actor in that it has the potential to both create jobs and contribute to domestic resource mobilisation by way of its tax payments in countries where it invests. It also has a particular type of sustainability in that it is acting in its own self-interest as opposed to being dependent on the whim of a foreign country’s taxpayers. Partnerships can be used to encourage private sector investments, for example with traditional DPs providing financial guarantees to potential investors to decrease risk. **Partnerships can also help unite supply and demand as is the case in Nigeria for example where government and donors are working to increase maize production and quality in a partnership with Nestlé who have guaranteed to purchase the outputs, an initiative that is on course to benefit some 20,000 smallholder farmers (Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture, n.d.).**

In addition, partnerships can help **mitigate against the negative social, economic or environmental effects** that may offset the benefits of private sector investment. For example, Oxfam works with Unilever to help its supply chain partners in developing countries improve conditions for workers and empower women while also increasing their social impact (Ibid.) and the EU has helped establish a partnership with the private sector and civil society to promote responsible mining in developing countries which has improved employment conditions for local communities (Laegard, 2018). Such approaches are increasingly welcomed by businesses themselves as consumers become more apt to factor in corporate responsibility when making purchasing choices and so “the enormous power of pressure from the increasingly aware public...has led to the adoption of new policies by major companies” (Craeynest, 2018, p.5).

Partnership is also important for **policy-making**. While respecting the tenets of ownership outlined above, many of the challenges to meeting the SDGs will need external expertise to unlock, be this from traditional DPs, the private sector, philanthropists or civil society. For example, a partner country government might source advice from foreign investors on how to improve the local

business climate or from a global fund specialised in health on what would work best for tackling infant mortality. In Burkina Faso for example, suggestions from the private sector were integrated in the new sectoral policy for industry, business, and handicrafts while DPs, civil society and government collaborated on a bill that was passed for combating corruption and judicial reform (OECD, *forthcoming*).

Partnership also applies to **domestic entities** within a partner country. External providers of support should not only deal with the central government but also seek to engage with local governments, parliaments, civil society, trade unions, and the private sector given that all of these actors have a legitimate voice in shaping what is happening in the country. Working with them helps to ensure ownership in the wider sense. This has been the case with the Scaling Up Nutrition network (SUN) which brings together governments, donors, philanthropists, the private sector and civil society to work on nutrition. The Network reported that in 2016-17 in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Myanmar and Nigeria there was a significant decline in the number of stunted children which correlated with SUN's partnership work to improve nutrition in these countries (SUN, 2017). External providers can also lobby for space for domestic stakeholders to be consulted by the local authorities in developing strategy so that policies and programmes better understand and respond to the needs of citizens, as was the case for example with Danish support to Bolivia which supported indigenous people to lobby for their land rights (Webster et al., 2018).

Partnership can help foster **progress on the other principles** such as ownership, transparency and focusing on results. For example, the Reproductive Maternal Newborn and Child Health Trust Fund worked in 19 countries using a partnership approach with partner country governments setting out plans and identifying needs and common targets with national stakeholders before DPs stepped forward to fund them in a coordinated manner. An evaluation of the Fund attributes its success at least partly to the strong ownership, alignment, coordination and joint working which this led to, both in planning and implementation. This is said to have helped ensure the local relevance of funding that was delivered in support of global goals, making sure it dove-tailed with existing support, and that all partners were kept focused on a common set of goals. It is estimated that over 230,000 maternal deaths were averted as a result (Beattie et al., 2017).

As well as being key to delivering the level of resources, innovation, and impact needed to achieve the first 16 SDGs, the principle of focusing on partnerships is itself enshrined in SDG 17 which commits to revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development and stresses the need for joined up work.

4.3 Transparency, Accountability, and Focus on Results

The increasing amount and variety of providers of support and the ambitious targets of the SDGs make joint, effective work essential for their achievement, as outlined above. Transparency, accountability, and focusing on results can both incentivise and facilitate this.

The first challenge is simply knowing what needs working on, something that is impossible without transparency. As the OECD's 2017 Development Cooperation Report points out, "Achieving the SDGs will require informed choices about priorities and strategies, and for this we will need a **better evidence base** than we have today" (OECD, 2017, p.3). The Report highlights that there is no data

whatsoever available for two-thirds of the SDG indicators. Working out what and who should be targeted is also key to ensuring that no-one is left behind. For example, in Bangladesh, Haiti, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania geospatial databases have been crucial to improve understanding of, and policy responses to, stunting, literacy and contraceptive access. **Meanwhile in Brazil, a network of civil society and private sector actors have launched the Índice de Progresso Social Amazônia which has published scorecards for nearly 800 municipalities providing a detailed understanding of the needs of individual communities. This has provoked a significant shift in priorities and resource targets by government and other providers of development financing (OECD, 2017 (p.31)).**

Once needs have been identified, **focusing on results** means getting national agreement on a set of targets, with government and external providers of support then aligning their work to these. The SDGs themselves reflect a results-centric approach with each having a series of targets to be achieved, giving a total of 167 in all. Countries are encouraged to prioritise those that are most relevant in their national goals. While such a results-focused approach may sound obvious and intuitive, some external providers of support have in the past been prone to setting their own goals (which dissipates efforts, as flagged in the section on fragmentation above, and makes monitoring much more cumbersome) or just focusing on money spent as opposed to what it achieved by it, assuming that more funding must automatically translate into better results. The development effectiveness movement has helped challenge this assumption and raise awareness that it is quite possible to spend large amounts of money badly, for example on activities ill-suited to the local environment or by financing capital expenditure that delivers outputs such as schools and hospitals when there is insufficient financing available for the recurrent costs needed to pay for teachers and doctors.

The **concept of mutual accountability** recognises that, once the results to be aimed for have been agreed, all development actors need to be accountable for what they do and achieve in support of them. For providers of external support, establishing accountability is particularly important given their rather unique situation. As mentioned above, they are not elected by the citizens of the partner country and thus are not called to account by a social contract (i.e. they do not face being voted out of office if they do not perform) and in addition, in the case of donors, philanthropists and international civil society, the people who finance their work are not the same ones who receive the product or service they produce, meaning that they are also not called to account by a market contract (i.e. they do not face going bankrupt if their product does not deliver). Given the lack of either of these two checks and balances, such providers can be more vulnerable to being diverted by other incentives such as organisational prestige. The current proliferation of providers and the fact that many of them may not have a local presence, only heightens the importance of mutual accountability in the SDG era. Governments meanwhile can be called to account for implementing their own promises and plans which can help strengthen the social contract and encourage progress on good governance and policy making.

A **mutual accountability framework** at the country level can therefore act as a powerful driver for all actors to stay focused on the agreed results and meet their stated commitments. By setting out who is supposed to do what in one place, simply establishing such a framework can also help highlight gaps and overlaps and therefore foster more joint initiatives. Progress against the framework and the agreed results can then be publicly monitored on a regular basis. This can act as a strong

incentive given that public exposure of missed targets is reputationally damaging and so acts as an effective stick while the promise of good publicity for achievements is an enticing carrot. When targets are not met, there is motivation to take corrective action so that it does not happen again. In Rwanda for example, donors update the online Development Assistance Database and Government then uses indicators from this to score their performance using a traffic light system of green, orange, or red. Results are made public and are said to have “noticeably incentivised the DPs to move from red to green zones, and proven to serve as a useful instrument for accountability” (Korean International Cooperation Agency, 2018, p.5). In Burkina Faso, the findings from the national accountability framework have been used to inform the new national development strategy, ensuring that lessons are learned from what has been achieved and not been achieved previously (OECD, forthcoming). As providers of external support have broadened beyond traditional DPs however, so mutual accountability frameworks and mechanisms need to also expand to encompass new providers if they are to remain relevant.

Accessible, transparent reporting of spending and results is also important for DPs vis-à-vis their **domestic audiences** as “rising scepticism about the effectiveness of aid in many western countries is increasing the demand for evidence about the effectiveness of such assistance” (Devaux & Rodrigues, 2016, p.7). This is especially important when DPs start investing in private sector companies, given these organisations’ stated goal is to make profit rather than to promote social and economic development. Taxpayers are therefore likely to demand to know exactly what is being paid to who, why, and what it is achieving if they are to remain supportive of such resource flows (Greenhill, 2016). The OECD state plainly that “the future of development co-operation depends on hard evidence about the impact that ODA [Official Development Assistance] has” (OECD, 2017, p.15).

Focusing on results and promoting mutual accountability can only work if there is transparency about activities and achievements, both from government and from external providers of support. This in turn necessitates good quality **data**. There is now a particular opportunity in this regard as advances in technology are allowing faster, easier, and thus more frequent collection of such data, so quicker feedback is available on how things are going and where change is needed, allowing a “more agile and adaptive approach” (Ibid., p.29) to responding to what happens on the ground. An example is allowing beneficiaries to submit feedback on what is happening on the ground via mobile phone. On the flip side, when good data is not available, World Bank research shows that costs rise and effectiveness decreases and that the effect of this is borne disproportionately by the very poor (World Bank, 2016).

Such data can be particularly valuable for incentivising **predictability**, checking up on whether providers of development finance make payments when promised. Delayed disbursements are consistently flagged by partner countries as one of their key concerns when asked what impairs the effectiveness of development cooperation (Greenhill, 2016). This is especially the case when they are part of a joint initiative as delays can impair the operation of a much larger programme, or where they are provided as budget support where they can disrupt the delivery of essential basic services.

It is also important that data is accessible. For funding from external providers, this can mean producing it in an **open format** such as that provided by the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), so that it is easily analysable by other stakeholders who may be outside of official mutual accountability mechanisms. For example, Mohinga, the online aid information management system in Myanmar provides publicly accessible information and analysis on donor spending in the IATI format and is used by civil society and journalists in calling donors to account. **Disaggregated** data is also vital to see who is being targeted and who is benefiting, an important part of the leave no-one behind agenda. This means data should be broken down by location, gender, age, disability, and ethnicity.

Even simpler formats may be needed depending on access to technology – for example in Uganda a free budget hotline has been established so that people can call to get information about Government spending (OECD, 2016). In Myanmar such information is published in local newspapers, while in Indonesia details of what support is due to who under a food subsidy programme is posted on village noticeboards in local languages to help combat corruption (OECD, 2018).

In conclusion, achieving development results and working towards the SDGs needs detailed data on the local context, an agreed set of results to be targeted, joined up action to work towards them, and fast, public feedback to facilitate accountability and to incentivise sticking to commitments and the identification of course corrections that may be necessary.

4.4 Budget Support

There is one way of delivering development financing that encompasses all of the principles. Budget support sees providers channelling funds through national systems to be used along with the rest of the budget to implement national policies, meaning there is automatic alignment and harmonisation behind the national strategy. It involves prior agreement on common results and performance targets for government and DPs, thereby promoting mutual accountability and a focus on results. As part of the national budget, funds are subject to the same parliamentary scrutiny as domestic funding. And the fact that that monies are channelled through a single government bank account brings transparency.

A synthesis of over 30 budget support evaluations concludes that delivering financing in this way leads to increased public spending and access to public services, especially for education and health, improves public financial management, and strengthens domestic accountability (Orth and Schmidt, 2018). A study on budget support in four African countries makes similar findings and goes on to say that “other aid modalities that account for much larger shares of ODA have not been able to achieve in a similar way and at comparable cost” (Orth et al., 2018, p.21). The same study goes on to say that “the attribution of these positive effects to budget support is further underlined by the fact that many of these...were not robust against the exit from the modality: in fact, most effects were negatively affected by the exit” and notes that such exits also caused an increase in fragmentation and a decrease in the influence of parliament and civil society on budget decisions (Ibid., p.133).

In Burkina Faso and Timor Leste for example, budget support has strengthened capacity to plan and execute reforms (OECD, forthcoming); in Ghana it has improved government’s ability to respond to external shocks (Ladj et al., 2017); in Nicaragua it has led to higher allocative efficiency of

government expenditure and had a positive effect on domestic accountability (IOB, 2010); and in Zambia it has helped maintain fiscal discipline which contributed to an economic turnaround, substantial improvements in public finance management, and improved service delivery in social sectors, particularly health (Leiderer & Faust, 2012).

Where budget support is paid in instalments whose size is linked to the achievement of specific deliverables, for example in health or education, it can provide a direct link to development results as it acts as a strong incentive for partner countries to achieve these on the ground (Schmidt, 2006).

Care is however needed in how budget support is delivered – too many conditions and reporting requirements can cause excessive transaction costs and bring ownership of national policy choices into question, while a lack of predictability in payments can put basic services at risk (IOB, 2012).

5. THE SDGs

5.1 SDG 4 – Quality Education

The SDGs recognise that education is one of the foundations for creating sustainable development and improving people's quality of life. SDG 4's overall aim is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The results targeted include more schools and trained teachers, higher enrolment rates (particularly for girls and marginalised groups), more free and subsidised education, and higher literacy rates. The SDG also covers education in its more general sense outside of primary and secondary school, extending to early childhood development, university education, and vocational training for example.

More information is available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>

5.1.1 Ownership

Assessments of support to education place the **overall concept of ownership** high up on the list of key success factors. An analysis of 40 education evaluations from across the world concludes that “activities for which there is a strong sense of local ownership are much more likely to be effective” (Samof et al., 2016, p.26). The same analysis highlights the need for “clear political support” and having “local actors play a leading role in all stages of design and implementation” in order to achieve results on the ground (Ibid., p.78). A global study of foreign aid to education reflects this, stressing the importance of ownership which it translates as the “need to integrate interventions within the context of long-term goals for the education system” and taking a “holistic, systemic view” (Riddell and Zarazúa, 2015, p.28).

The European Commission (EC) has promoted the development of **inclusive national education strategies** in countries where it supports this sector, which it then seeks to work behind. A global evaluation of its support to education reports that “major advancements have been made in aligning EC support to education with partner countries' national priorities and policies.” (Ladj et al, 2010, p. x). The same evaluation goes on to describe the results achieved from this approach, commenting that, “EC support has helped partner countries to progress towards the Goal [of universal primary

education], and appears to have contributed to improving access and completion rates” (Ibid., p.xi), “has effectively assisted partner countries in accommodating an enrolment expansion” (Ibid., p.xv), and has “contributed...to the abolishment of school fees in a number of countries” (Ibid., p.xi). The Asian Development Bank has reported similar findings in evaluating its education support in central Asia where it concludes that “projects that respond to the government’s priorities and have full government commitment...have better chances of success” (Evaluation Department, 2010, p.iv). Similarly, the World Bank finds that the countries that have seen the strongest improvements in learning all have explicit national education policies and strong national commitments to educational development which major DPs have lined up behind (Independent Evaluation Group, 2006).

Active **harmonisation and alignment** can be particularly important in the education sector as a review of Australian support highlights, stressing that there is a need for “collaborative and coordinated action from DPs and government” due to the sector’s distinctiveness in exhibiting an entanglement of “so many policy, resourcing and institutional capacity issues” (Office of Development Effectiveness, 2015, p.80). An evaluation of the UK’s support to the education sector in East Africa concludes that “working in close partnership with national counterparts is key to UK aid having impact” and that no DP or other provider of support can act effectively alone (Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 2012). An evaluation of Swedish support to education in Zanzibar finds that stronger coordination between government and DPs contributes to increased efficiency and effectiveness. These individual DP standpoints highlight lining up behind agreed sector programmes and combining funds in joint programmes as key ways of achieving harmonisation and alignment in practice. Complementing such approaches, a global review of support to education recommends a “division of labour amongst development agencies engaged in the sector, so as not to crowd in work on the same sub-sector or issue...[and] to ensure appropriate and sufficient coverage of different educational areas” (Riddell & Zarazúa, 2015, p.28). It then flags the value of forming sector coordination groups and tracking what providers of support are working on with online aid information management systems to help establish and monitor division of labour in practice.

Given these research findings, one should therefore expect to see **better development results when providers coordinate their support**, as is demonstrated in Box 1 on the next page.

The global evaluation of EC work cited earlier also notes that “EC support to education has increasingly been delivered through joint approaches” (Ladj et al., 2010, p.x) which is said to have contributed to the results noted above.

Strengthening and using **country systems** has special relevance in the education sector where avoiding parallel delivery mechanisms is particularly important to build state legitimacy given that education, along with health, is one of the most fundamental and visible sectors of public service provision. An evaluation of Swiss Development Cooperation’s support to education in Afghanistan notes its work to reinforce government school systems is helping “the national government to build their capacity and eventually be the primary service provider, instead of donors setting up parallel or alternative education systems.” It goes on to explain that “supporting the government in post-conflict or fragile states to build their education system from early stages and continuing this support is an important recommendation...Government being able to provide education to its citizens not only helps in improving education conditions, but also supports the peacebuilding

process by improving the trust in the government” (Steiner-Khamsi et al., 2015, p.7). Thus use of country systems in education is contributing both to education results and more broadly to reinforcing the state and its social contract with citizens. Similarly, a study by AusAid states that using country systems in the education sector “should lead to better development outcomes through a chain of virtuous effects.” It points out that in education “effective government systems are clearly critical for improving the lives of citizens, and the commitment to using these systems for aid provides an incentive for donors to help to strengthen them. State institutions can be legitimised and made more accountable through strengthening domestic demand for better government performance, which is critical for sustainability” (Education Resource Facility, 2011, p.4). Budget

Box 1: Owning Education in Nepal

In Nepal, education is one of a handful of sectors, along with education and water / sanitation, where a sector wide approach has been pursued. This has seen external providers line up behind a national strategy and the required support divided up between them. Such an approach has allowed different sources of support to better complement one another and each provider to focus on their strengths.

The Government’s 2017 SDG review notes the impressive results achieved in education completion rates as a result, which are particularly notable for girls who moved from a situation of being left far behind to one of parity with boys. Between 2000 and 2015 the following improvements were recorded:

- *Primary completion rate:* Girls: 59% ⇒ 87% Boys 79% ⇒ 86%
- *Secondary completion rate:* Girls: 36% ⇒ 90% Boys 52% ⇒ 89%

Government highlights that in all the sectors where this approach was followed there have been “better results compared to other sectors” and that the respective MDG targets “were reached because of resource harmonisation and the systematic approach” that it has involved. It goes on to recommend that a sector wide approach be rolled out in all other viable sectors going forward as part of efforts to reach the SDGs.

[National Review of Sustainable Development Goals, National Planning Commission \(2017\)](#)

The promotion of ownership can also help **crowd in new development financing** as investors can be assured that their support will form part of a coherent plan and thus be more likely to generate sustainable results. This is a significant benefit given the considerable additional resources that meeting SDG will 4 require, estimated at some \$38bn per year (UNESCO, 2014). For example, in Rwanda the pursuit of a sector wide approach was assessed to have “led to the mobilization of additional resources through the Education for All Fast Track Initiative” (Development Assistance Committee, 2010, p.121). Likewise, in Afghanistan, Norway’s support of the development of the National Education Strategy Plan “served as an important vote of confidence and as a result

Afghanistan was admitted to the Global Partnership for Education” ([Ecorys, 2012, p.94](#)), thus opening a significant new window of financing.

5.1.2 Inclusive Development Partnerships

As indicated above, meeting SDG 4 will require substantial new financing. This means that new financiers need to be brought in with partnerships being used both to attract them and to better leverage their contributions.

In many countries, the **private sector** is playing an important role in education and proving to be a more efficient provider than the state. There is however still a need to provide consistent standards, maintain access, and ensure government “branding” as noted in the ownership section above. This is where partnership can play a valuable role. In Uganda for example, the Government pays private schools in areas where there are no public ones to deliver education on its behalf. Enrolment rates have increased by 77% since the scheme was introduced (Businge, 2011). In Brazil, the Government instead pays a private sector contractor to provide 2,000 state schools with a package covering curricula, technology, teacher training and school management. This has seen 90% of students beating national standards by 20% or more in exams (Bellinger and Fletcher, 2014).

Bringing in new financiers such as the private sector, philanthropists, and civil society to work with traditional DPs and Government can also be done on a **sector-wide** scale. Cambodia moved from a fragmented system of education provision in the 1990s with different providers working in isolation and using parallel systems towards one of partnership, adopting a sector wide approach as mentioned above and coordinating investments behind a common plan. This is reported to have led to

a doubling in the number of children reaching the last year of lower secondary school between 2000 and 2008 with improvements most noticeable among girls and in rural and remote areas, which is where the majority of the poorest live ([Engle & Rose, 2011](#)).

The **Global Partnership for Education** is a fund that supports basic education provision in over 60 countries and is the fourth largest donor worldwide to basic education in low and middle-income states. Wherever it works, it supports the government to develop a high-quality education sector plan. It then encourages government to provide sufficient domestic funding to this plan while also seeking to mobilise support from foreign public and private sources, thus promoting alignment and harmonisation. It also establishes “local education groups” which include government, DPs, civil society, private sector and philanthropists. These provide inputs throughout the education planning cycle, from analysis through to evaluation, thus promoting mutual accountability. Finally, the Partnership enforces a rule that it will withhold thirty percent of grant funding if agreed targets are not met, thus ensuring a focus on results. Thus, the approach embodies not only the partnership principle but also ownership, transparency, accountability and focusing on results. It has led to significant achievements that together represent considerable progress towards SDG 4. These include, for the countries where the Partnership worked between 2002 and 2016, an increase in the number of children in pre-primary education from 19% to 37%, some 77 million more children in primary school, an increase in the percentage of children completing primary school from 63% to 76% and secondary school from 38% to 50%, an increase in the number of countries that have as

many girls as boys in school from 42% to 66%, and 42% of countries improving equity for female, rural and poor children (Global Partnership for Education website, 2019).

5.1.3 Transparency, Accountability and Focus on Results

A study on international organisations' work in education states that "education systems cannot perform professionally without **reliable information**" (Heyneman & Lee, 2015, p.14). This is critical to know what is needed, what is being done, and what it is achieving, and applies as much to the public sector as to external providers of support. A second study covering 40 evaluations of support to education concludes that, "everyone agrees that effective education planning and management require reliable and regularly updated information" while an evaluation of Finland's support to education flags that without good data "it is difficult...to know whether the various inputs have reached potential clients and met their learning needs" (Nielsen et al., 2015, p.43). Similarly, an evaluation of the UK's support to the education sector in East Africa notes that "institutional learning is fundamental to building a successful education system. Without active monitoring and feedback as a core management process the necessary improvements will not be identified, designed or achieved" (Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 2012, p.20).

Unfortunately, the current situation is such that **good data is lacking** in many cases. The study covering 40 evaluations notes that, "the need for better information management, data and indicators is a pervasive finding across the evaluations we have reviewed" (Samof et al., 2016, p.91). The Heyneman and Lee study concludes that "in many instances education data are unreliable...for example, there are no accurate counts of school attendance by student age, no accurate information on unit expenditures, little evidence of trends in academic achievement and wide variation in their quality from one part of the world to another" (Heyneman & Lee, 2015, p.14). This will present a key challenge to meeting SDG 4 if it is not addressed. A dedicated UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) study on the SDG's monitoring needs notes that there is now "an unprecedented demand on countries to produce more and better data...to monitor and achieve the SDG" (Institute for Statistics, 2017, p.7).

All of the studies referenced above see a role for both partner country governments and providers of support to strengthen their efforts in data gathering, publication and use, in particular agreeing on a set of indicators and sources to monitor them. As UNESCO highlight, this is fundamental for formulating **mutual accountability frameworks** where progress can be measured and thus decision-makers called to account (Institute for Statistics, 2016). This kind of mechanism in Zambia for example has been used to structure an annual review that has presented both successes and failures and allowed open debate, concluding each year with specific recommendations for improvements in the coming year (DFID & Global Partnership for Education, 2015).

However, **accountability can also be promoted outside of such formal structures** if transparent, open data is available. In Tanzania for example, civil society examined Government spending reports for education and found a mismanaged sum equivalent to the annual salary of 10,000 primary school teachers. This led to a dedicated meeting called by the President to look into the issue and significant pressure within Government to address it (Ramkumar, 2008). In Uganda, civil society set up a dedicated network to track spending under the country's Universal Primary Education Programme, subsequently holding public hearings to raise concerns about issues such as poor

quality school construction and missing funds which led to action being taken by Government (Carlitz, 2010). Similar work in Guatemala checked delivery against budget and found that 75% of schools were not receiving textbooks that according to the budget had been paid for, which led to an investigation being launched by the Ministry of Education (Ramkumar, 2008, p.98). Thus, transparent and accessible expenditure information, along with a motivated local civil society, can improve development results on the ground by acting as an effective accountability mechanism.

The issue of focusing on results has particular pertinence in education given the sensitivity required on **what is seen as a “result”**. One particular concern is a focus on enrolment rates rather than actual learning (that is to say literacy and numeracy), which has led in some cases to success being claimed on the basis of more children being in school when the actual quality of the education they are receiving is substantially below par and may have actually deteriorated as more students are packed into the same number of classrooms and no more teachers are hired. Heyneman and Lee highlight that, in such situations, “many children complete primary school without becoming literate” and conclude that there is “an increasing need for more and better data on educational quality such as learning outcomes” (Heyneman & Lee, 2015, p.13).

The concept of a results focus has been extended in the education sector in some countries by setting up mechanisms where **financing is provided if they are achieved** and withheld if they are not. Social impact bonds for education see the partner country government paying the private sector to deliver a specific outcome, for example an increase in literacy rates. Development impact bonds work the same way but with DPs providing the financing. This approach allows government, DPs and the private sector to “work together to achieve outcomes better than they would have been able to deliver individually” (Bellinger and Fletcher, 2014, p.19). In Pakistan for example, a scheme in the Punjab has seen private schools being paid a monthly subsidy per student if they waive tuition fees and then meet exam pass targets. The scheme covers over a thousand schools and half a million students and has produced both a marked increase in exam scores while delivering a zero dropout rate (Mailk, 2010, p.27). Similarly, the UK agreed to pay the Ethiopian Government up to \$150 for each extra pupil sitting the school leaving exam and the same again if they passed and, within two years, more than 40,000 extra had sat and passed (The Economist, May 23rd 2015).

Publicising data on results has also been found to be important to **stimulate demand** for education as awareness of the potential returns from attending school can have a significant effect on attendance. A study of the policies and programmes which work best to improve education results in developing countries finds that among the most promising is “providing information directly to students and parents on the returns to education” (Glewe et al., 2016, p.53).

Predictability is important in education as a core part of service provision involves recurrent costs in terms of teachers’ salaries. Where funding is not paid on time, either by government or external providers of support, it can thus seriously impact results. A study in Zambia noted that “erratic and unpredictable funding was identified as one of the major problems for efficient service delivery in basic education” (Leiderer et al., 2012, p.178) and that it left schools unable to effectively plan, coordinate and implement activities and spending significant amounts of effort preparing initiatives that subsequently had to be delayed, reconfigured or even cancelled due to funding not arriving as promised. Similarly, a lack of predictability in aid funding in Rwanda led to a decision to hire

contractual teachers on a short-term basis as opposed to regular long-term teachers which affected both the quality of teaching and shortened the length of time teachers stayed in post, thus impairing the quality of education that was provided (Lister et al., 2010).

5.1.4 Budget Support

Education results linked to the use of budget support can be viewed as an **endorsement of the principles' relevance** in helping to achieve SDG 4, given that this aid modality embodies ownership, partnership, mutual accountability, transparency and focusing on results.

A global evaluation of EU support to education states that the use of sector budget support did indeed **deliver robust results** including contributing to “the increase of the transition rates to lower secondary and upper secondary by supporting the government policy of reducing repetition and drop-out rates at primary level” (Ladj et al., 2010, p.xi). The same evaluation flags that the modality has allowed partner country governments to improve education across their national systems, as opposed to taking only a piecemeal approach, due to the extra resources that it provides directly to the budget. Similarly, a UK evaluation of education budget support in East Africa reports that it has delivered “significant progress towards universal access to, and gender parity in, primary education” and that “there has also been steady improvement in secondary level enrolment” (Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 2012, p.1).

These positive findings on the impact of education budget support are echoed by an EU evaluation of using this modality in **Mali, Tunisia, and Zambia** which finds that “its contribution to increased investment and reform implementation in social sectors has helped the countries achieve significant outcomes in education” ([Caputo, Lawson et al., 2011, p.4](#)), noting that “in all three countries, important achievements in education in terms of enrolment, gender balance, and access from poor areas were registered” (Ibid., p.7). For example, in Mali between 2002 and 2009, “the gross enrolment rate for basic (primary) education rose from 64% to 81%...and the completion rate increased from 40% to 56%” (Ibid., p.12). In Tunisia, education sector budget support is reported to have led to “significant improvements in the institutional, strategic and financial management of the higher education sector” which have led to “significant quantitative increases (and territorial equity) in access to education” (Ibid., p.24).

In addition, in some cases budget support payments are made **directly in response to results** being achieved and thus provide a strong incentive for reaching them. In Nicaragua for example, education budget support instalments were paid at either 100%, 50% or 0% of their intended value, depending on the results achieved in the preceding period (IOB, 2010).

Budget support can also serve to **crowd in public financing** for the sector. The EU evaluation cited above found that budget support had encouraged Mali, Tunisia, and Zambia to increase education budgets from around 3% to over 5% between 2000 and 2012 with accompanying increases in the number of schools, teachers, and enrolled children (Caputo, Lawson et al., 2011). Maintaining or increasing the latter may even be a condition for providing such support in the first place, for example EU sector budget support to education in Myanmar mandates that the percentage of national revenues spent on education must increase over time.

Finally, the use of sector budget support can benefit governance and thus development results across the board by making **national systems more robust**. In Rwanda, its use in the education sector is said to have “provided additional momentum to public finance management reform” (Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 2012, p.12) which in turn “strengthened the position of the Ministry of Finance over line ministries, creating more discipline and accountability within the budget process” (Ibid.) thus benefiting not only the management of national education funds but of the budget as a whole.

5.2 SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

SDG 8’s overall aim is to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. The concrete results that the international community has specified should be targeted under this SDG include increasing Gross Domestic Product, company formation, job creation, the protection of labour rights, the eradication of forced labour, child labour and human trafficking, and the promotion of aid for trade.

More information is available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg8>

As mentioned above, and following the recommendation of the EU, this section focuses on the employment generation and aid for trade aspect of SDG 8.

5.2.1 Ownership

Employment generation and trade are central goals for any government and ones that hinge not only on good policy in their own domains but also in related ones such as education and infrastructure. As such, there is a strong argument that employment and trade policies need to be integrated within overall national plans that complement them in order to be effective and that external providers of support need to align to these, that is to say ownership is key.

For example, in **Bangladesh**, a core focus of the development cooperation of Denmark, the EU and Sweden has been employment generation and trade promotion. A joint strategic country evaluation reported that a key factor in the success of their support was “alignment to national priorities and policies at either local or central level and domestic ownership at these levels” (ADE, 2016, p.15). This is said to have helped contribute to increased incomes for millions of people, improvements in private sector development, and policy and regulatory level reforms. The latter two have put the country in a better position to take advantage of global trading opportunities and “allowed for rapidly increasing exports, encouraging a process of labour-intensive industrialisation that has also marked the unprecedented entry of millions of women into the labour force” (Ibid., p.77).

Togo has placed employment and trade at the centre of its national Strategy for Boosting Growth and Promoting Employment which external providers of support have shown a willingness to subscribe to with 96% of development assistance reported to be aligned with the main national priorities in 2015 (GPEDC, 2016). This ownership and alignment is said to have contributed to development results that have included progressive falls in unemployment and underemployment rates as well as a fall in the poverty rate from 55% in 2015 to 52% in 2017 (ECOSOC, VNR 2018).

In **Timor Leste**, employment generation has been aided by an inclusive national strategy “serving as an effective planning framework” (World Bank, 2011, p.98). Combined with a strong coordination

platform this has provided a “good anchor for government-influenced and increasingly government-led aid coordination” (Ibid.) with 90% of all development co-operation aligned to national objectives (GPEDC, 2016). This has facilitated more joint approaches and the delivery of budget support which in turn has helped government to create employment (World Bank, 2011).

Also in the area of employment, the **EU has endorsed country ownership** by promoting the development of inclusive national strategies and then aligning its support to these. This has seen it seek “increasing involvement of key national counterparts” (Particip, 2011, p.83) in planning, which a global evaluation of support to the sector views as having delivered “due consideration of partner countries’ needs and priorities” (Ibid.). This approach has contributed to the fact that “EC support has resulted in increased employment opportunities” and helped improve employability (Particip, 2011, p.8). Similarly, the EU’s 2013-4 Report on Selected Results shows that support aligned to inclusive national strategies led to employability being improved for more than 300,000 people (EC, 2017).

An evaluation of **EU trade-related assistance** notes that it has “increasingly been aligned to its partners’ priorities” (Particip, 2013, p.ii). The evaluation reports that “a common denominator for success appeared to be highly-committed governments that assumed strong leadership and capacities for trade reform processes, and for ownership in policy design, implementation and monitoring” (Ibid, 2013, p.23). This has also allowed sector budget support to be provided which is said to have effectively assisted trade reform processes in the majority of cases. Overall, EU support in this area is reported to have achieved “significant results in most of the priority areas” by following such an approach (Ibid., p.i).

Channelling funding through country systems in the form of **budget support** can also be directly linked to results. For example, in 2018, Australia provided direct budget support to the Solomon Islands Government, linking payments to the achievement of key performance indicators designed to incentivise reforms including employment and trade (DFAT, 2018).

5.2.2 Inclusive Development Partnerships

Employment is a sector that directly involves the private sector and where civil society also plays a key role, particularly in representing employees and in acting as a check and balance on companies' activities. As such it is an area ripe for inclusive partnerships between such actors and government and DPs.

Box 2: Taking Care of Business in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso shows a high degree of ownership, alignment and harmonisation in development cooperation delivery. A robust national development strategy and openness to dialogue have acted as a "tool for mobilising resources" (OECD, forthcoming) with nine donors providing budget support. In addition, 100% of official development assistance is said to be aligned with national targets (GPEDC, 2016). This has contributed to significant growth rates over a long period - 5.3% on average between 2000 and 2010 (Particip GmbH, 2016, p.1) - and low unemployment of around 3%.

Government has recognised the importance of the private sector for driving economic and social change by creating jobs and promoting trade. It has been keen to ensure a conducive environment for business to flourish and realised that the best source of expertise on how to do this lay within the private sector itself. Regular structured meetings between public and private sector counterparts have included a focus on what policies work best. There has been an emphasis on the practical, and private sector inputs have led to new measures being introduced by government to reduce the costs and the red tape involved in setting up a new business. A one stop shop has also been established with private sector support to give advice to new start-ups and help facilitate administrative formalities. This is allowing more businesses to be set up more quickly and thus contributing to both employment and trade (OECD, Forthcoming).

Private sector development in the country is still impaired by other issues such as infrastructure deficits but work is ongoing to address these. Efforts are also underway to consolidate the various laws and regulations that apply to the private sector in order to provide a more coherent overall framework.

Partnerships with government can see these actors exerting a positive influence on policy. For example, for the private sector to create jobs it needs a conducive business environment and can be well placed to advise partner country governments on what this requires in practice, as illustrated in the boxed example above. Similarly, an evaluation of the World Bank and IFC Support for Youth Employment Programme in Ghana found that private sector participation was one of the key factors influencing success (World Bank, 2013). Civil society meanwhile can advise on the kind of social and environmental policies that would help ensure against negative externalities. This is a key precept of the International Labour Organization's Decent Work Agenda for example.

The success of DPs' work can also be enhanced by partnering with such actors. An evaluation of EU support to employment in 20 countries notes that it can be “considered positive in terms of the employment situation for new labour market entrants” (Particip, 2011, p.104) and that this is partly due to “increased participatory processes” (Particip, 2011, p.89). Partnering is said to have allowed better tailoring of the EU’s approach to the local situation by allowing national stakeholders to adjust it to the local context. Similarly, Denmark’s support to the private sector in Ghana has involved consultation with business and also with civil society to strengthen their advocacy capacity, including for labour rights. This is reported to have allowed a more sustainable approach and helped create higher quality jobs (Denmark, 2017).

Though all of the SDGs will require financing from the private sector, employment and trade are areas where is particularly relevant given the direct role of businesses in providing employment and enhancing trade in the course of their normal activities. Therefore **simply incentivising and facilitating companies to invest** boosts both employment and trade. For example, Denmark’s Investment Fund for Developing Countries is estimated to have created 400,000 jobs in partner countries to date (OECD, 2016). Finland’s Finnfund programme meanwhile supported companies that employed 50,000 people in partner countries in 2017 (OECD, 2017).

DPs can also partner with the private sector to encourage them to **engage directly in development work** which may nevertheless also serve to benefit their businesses in the longer term. For example, the Swedish Leadership for Sustainable Development programme has companies committing additional resources to tackle development challenges in countries where Swedish development co-operation is active (Sida, 2016), such as providing vocational training to improve employability or working on policies to create better quality jobs (Sida, 2016). The Swedish Investors for Sustainable Development programme meanwhile works to engage business on the SDGs and activities have included formulating indicators on decent work.

DPs can also partner with governments to **promote public sector investments** that particularly favour employment. For example, **the International Labour Organization’s Employment Intensive Investment Programme works with both government and DPS to encourage the design of infrastructure programmes that will create significant numbers of jobs. Civil society is also involved to try to ensure that projects do not have adverse social and environmental effects. Examples of results achieved include over 600,000 work days created in Timor Leste and over 130,000 in Somalia, where they have been particularly focused on the most vulnerable (ILO, 2019).**

DPs can also work directly with the private sector to **improve employment quality**. The Better Work Programme supported by the International Labour Organization and the International Finance Corporation involves a partnership with business and workers’ organisations to improve labour standards and thus create better quality employment in labour intensive industries. It emphasises the value of meeting international standards to employers, highlighting that this is in their interests as it can provide access to global supply chains. Results from the Programme include improving conditions for more than three million workers and 60% of the companies worked with having increased the number of people they employ (ILO PARDEV, 2019).

Partnership is also embodied in the global approach towards achieving this SDG. The UN’s Decent Jobs for Youth Initiative is in effect a partnership of partnerships, bringing together groups and

organisations from across the world that are working to ensure that young people have access to decent work. This includes governments, DPs, private sector and civil society. The Initiative seeks to join up efforts where appropriate and to ensure lessons learned are passed on. The programme focuses on interventions that are locally owned and aligned with national development priorities and provides the highest level endorsement for an inclusive partnership approach to employment (Decent Jobs for Youth, 2019).

5.2.3 Transparency, Accountability, and Focus on Results

In both employment and trade, good information is essential to tailor policy and track results. As in other areas, transparency, accountability, and focusing on results help in knowing what needs to be done, coordinating work to do it, and tracking what is then done and what it achieves, enabling course corrections where needed. As funding flows to support these areas become increasingly complex, so this issue takes on increasing prominence.

Support to trade tends to come from a **variety of sources** meaning that good coordination between them is essential in order to exploit synergies and avoid gaps. This in turn requires transparency, accountability, and a focus on results. A strategic evaluation of EU trade-related assistance flags that information exchange to promote coordination and avoid overlaps has played a key role in the design and implementation of initiatives (Particip, 2013) and that this has contributed to results including enhanced supply capacity, better compliance with standards, an improved investment climate, and deepened regional trade and economic integration.

A **focus on results** was critical to the achievements of World Bank support to the Government of Timor-Leste, providing “a unified framework for monitoring the government’s program in different areas” (World Bank, 2011, p.26) and thus promoting ownership and alignment. Monitoring of this framework was then used to facilitate a partnership between DPs and government, becoming “the principal instrument for policy dialogue between the Government of Timor-Leste and its development partners” (Ibid., p.101). Support provided under the programme helped create over 300 new businesses and 1,200 jobs (Ibid.).

Denmark’s use of results frameworks which are monitored annually has proved of value in helping shape new initiatives, learning from the successes and failures of the past. For example, the results of the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge Fund in Ghana were used to inform the design of a new private sector support programme in the country (OECD, 2016). This was crucial to the success of the new programme which trained 24,000 workers and benefited almost 8,000 companies (Orbicon, 2018), allowing them to “expand or penetrate markets and thereby increase sales, profits and employment” (Denmark, 2017, p.33).

Using results frameworks can also facilitate **alignment with international targets** such as the SDGs. This is the case with Switzerland’s support to Ghana which is oriented around a results framework that is aligned with the country development objectives as well as with the SDGs. The framework is used to provide a selection of key data for steering and accountability and thus allows course corrections where necessary as well as promoting transparency about the support provided and its impact, both to local and domestic stakeholders (SECO, 2017). This approach has allowed support to employment to be well targeted and integrated and so “consistently reflect the main intervention

approach” (SECO & SDC, 2017, p.35) which has in turn contributed to a success rate in achieving employment related outcomes of some 85%, including the expanding of skills of marginalised groups which has served to increase their employability (Ibid.).

5.3 SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities

As mentioned above, and following the recommendation of the EU, this section focuses on the **social protection** aspect of SDG 10. Social protection is a wide-ranging term for policies that work to prevent, manage, or overcome situations that impair people’s well-being such as low income, unemployment, exclusion and illness. As such, work in the sector focuses on helping the most marginalised. As one of the key ideas underpinning the SDGs is to leave no one behind, social protection is particularly important for the 2030 Agenda. In addition to featuring as a key component of SDG 10, there are 11 of the Goals and 28 of the targets that are related to social protection (Handayani, 2017).

The UN flags that work in this area has gained increasing traction in recent years as a wide body of evidence has accumulated that “strongly suggests that social protection programmes can be effective tools to reduce poverty and inequality, increase human capital and protect men, women, girls and boys from risks” (Fernandez & Omilola, 2016, p.8) while the OECD highlights its role in extending beyond poverty alleviation to contributing to long-term growth (OECD, 2018). This has led to “an appetite for implementing social protection programmes in virtually every country around the world” (Fernandez & Omilola, 2016, p.9). There is however still substantial work to be done as less than half of people worldwide actually have access to social protection (ILO, 2017), with coverage being particularly low in both Africa and Asia (OECD, 2018). Governments “continue to underspend on the sector” which is described by researchers as “particularly damaging given its clear direct role in delivering progress across a range of SDGs” (Saman et al., 2018, p.50). In the Overseas Development Institute’s flagship 2018 report on SDG progress, scaling up financing to social protection is included as one of the headline recommendations for the consideration by the 2019 UN High-level Political Forum (Saman et al., 2018).

5.3.1 Ownership

The target beneficiaries of work on social protection are by definition those who have been excluded in some way and are thus living in socially or economically marginalised conditions, either on an ongoing basis or due to a shock that has occurred. As such, ownership is particularly important in three ways. Firstly, the state needs to take responsibility for these citizens who have slipped through the net, fulfilling its role as a duty bearer by providing basic protection. As the German Development Institute highlight, this serves to strengthen the social contract and social cohesion as “where public social protection schemes exist, citizens identify more closely with the state and show their willingness to fulfil their obligations to the community” (Loewe, 2010, p.2). Thus, promoting the state involvement aspect of ownership can have considerable knock-on benefits in terms of state building and stability. Secondly, state involvement has been shown to be important for the sustainability of work on the ground, with an EU study on social protection finding that political commitment has been key to almost all successful schemes (Giovannetti et al., 2010). Thirdly, ownership in the wider sense is required in that there needs to be a participatory role for target communities in state policy and decision-making to ensure that their needs are taken into account

and addressed in a viable way. As a UN social protection study recognises, “breaking the cycle of inequality and poverty requires institutions that are responsive to the needs of people and promote their active participation in decision making processes” (Fernandez & Omilola, 2016, p.29). The same study goes on to report that “enabling communities to articulate their needs has been a particularly powerful tool for more inclusive and sustainable social protection” (Ibid.).

Social protection support that is provided under the umbrella of an **inclusive national strategy** should therefore pay off in terms of development results. In Rwanda, Government has made the sector a pillar of its long-term inclusive development strategy. The Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme has subsequently shown impressive results including a decrease in the number of beneficiary households belonging to the “most vulnerable” category from 41% to 9% between 2006 and 2009 (Giovannetti et al., 2010). Poverty also declined overall from 57% to 45% between 2006 and 2011, a fall that was “mostly attributed” to the programme (Development Initiatives, 2015). **The importance of an inclusive national strategy can likewise be seen in Cambodia where Government, civil society and DPs organised a national consultation on HIV-sensitive social protection which included participation from people living with HIV and gave them a key role in identifying where access to social protection needed to be improved as well as developing new services to meet the specific needs of affected households. The recommendations of these consultations were then included in the national development strategy, ultimately contributing to more efficient and effective service provision (UNDP, 2014).**

Given their diverse remit, social protection services often suffer from **fragmentation** with various different Government bodies, DPs and civil society each offering different services focused on specific problems but not joined up with one another or aligned to a national plan. As a World Bank evaluation flags, on the Government side “many countries have a plethora of small programs, often having the same objectives but run by different ministries” while on the external provider side initiatives can tend to be “small scale, fragmented, and scattered throughout the country” (Independent Evaluation Group, 2011, p.77). Such a lack of coherence impedes the achievement of development results as it leads to gaps and overlaps, an inefficient use of resources, fewer people being reached, and overall a tendency towards short-term alleviation of specific issues as opposed to long-term comprehensive solutions that move people into social and economic security. In short, programmes and projects “address various pockets of need, yet lack the coverage and cohesiveness necessary to build...institutions over the longer run or to serve as a potential mechanism for addressing other shocks that might arise” (Ibid., p.61). As such, there is a clear need to work on harmonisation to improve results, and to establish a “coordinated system of programmes that interact and complement each other” (Fernandez & Omilola, 2016, p.32).

In Malawi, sub-par results in social protection were attributed to the imposition of policies by external providers of support that were not context specific as well as a lack of coordination among different projects and programmes (Chikadza, 2011, p.12). This was addressed with the Government’s development of the Social Cash Transfer Scheme which brought together a variety of external providers for both design assistance and funding support (Abdulayi et al., 2016). The new aligned and harmonised approach was reported to have delivered “important poverty-reducing impacts” including an increase in investment in agricultural assets, a 60% reduction in adult

participation in low-skilled labour, and a marked decrease in child labour outside the home (Development Initiatives, 2015, p.25).

Coordination with other relevant sectors can also pay dividends. In Latin America for example, considerable work has been put into linking social protection initiatives with financial inclusion work. This has seen social protection programmes “not only using the financial sector to more efficiently transfer subsidies, but also collaborating with institutions to improve access to and foster use of financial services” (OECD, 2018).

Finally, harmonisation also makes it easier for potential beneficiaries to **find out about and access** services, given there should be less of them as a result and they should be better linked to one another. This means that these services can reach more people than they otherwise would, again improving development results (Fernandez & Omilola, 2016).

It is often a failure of **country systems** to operate as they are supposed to that has led to issues of marginalisation and exclusion in the first place. Strengthening and using such systems can help ensure that national social protection programmes are sustainable in future and serve to rebuild the social contract between citizen and state (Loewe, 2010). Choosing to establish parallel systems instead tends to further undermine the state-citizen relationship.

One additional advantage of using country systems for a particular initiative is that they can subsequently be **used for other purposes**. For example, once an efficient payment system has been developed to reach beneficiaries in a cash transfer scheme, the World Bank notes that “it can be used for emergency disbursements after a natural disaster, for regular social pension benefit disbursements, or for a new conditional cash transfer program to encourage children’s attendance in school” (Independent Evaluation Group, 2011, p.55). This is also relevant for systems which gather and process data, for example in Brazil a single-household registry developed for the Bolsa Familia programme has subsequently been used by Government for beneficiary-targeting across a range of sectors.

5.3.2 Inclusive Development Partnerships

Partnerships that involve not only Government and donors but also other actors such as civil society, and the private sector in policy, planning, and implementation are of particular value in social protection. A German study of social protection work around the world concludes that “experience shows that they [social protection systems] will only be sustainable and effective if civil society, the private sector and the state cooperate closely and complement one another and if the state bears overall responsibility” (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009, p.4).

One reason partnerships are crucial in the sector is the importance of **accessing local knowledge** when designing and delivering social protection initiatives. The causes of vulnerability and marginalisation are often complex and vary greatly between people and places meaning that, as the Overseas Development Institute highlight, “context-specific design and delivery is crucial for enhancing the effects of interventions...policies and programmes must take into account the complexity of the social, economic, institutional and governance context of local communities” (Babajanian et al., 2014, p.iv). To gain such insights into local context, and to subsequently design and deliver appropriate responses, requires involving organisations already working on the ground.

These organisations will normally include civil society and/or the private sector who have stepped in where the state has been absent. Such partnerships should also of course involve local communities themselves, both to further understand the local context and to “generate community acceptance...and prevent potential tension” (Babajanian et al, 2014, p.7).

While the tenets of ownership mandate that the state takes overall responsibility, partnership can also deliver better results by **allowing other stakeholders to take care of delivery**. The state may simply not be the organisation with the best tools for the job in certain circumstances and therefore it can be more effective to mandate others to implement on its behalf using their own skills, experience, connections, and implementation capacity, as opposed to trying to adapt state machinery. The state should however still set the overall direction and goals, ensure that work is joined up, and maintain its “branding” on what is done on the ground. For example, the Indonesian Raskin programme, which provides poor and vulnerable households with access to subsidised rice, sees the Government partnering with banks and a telecommunications company to manage delivery. The increased efficiency and effectiveness which this has provided vis-à-vis the state trying to deliver on its own - which had previously caused substantial inefficiencies and leakage – has led to the programme gaining traction fast, scaling up over 2 years from 1 million to 10 million beneficiaries (OECD, 2018). Similarly, in Pakistan, the government initiated a cash grant scheme that was delivered via debit cards provided by the banking sector and part funded with contributions from DPs. This kind of out-sourcing was seen as key to the success of the programme, with the state recognising it did not have the capacity to establish and service the debit card distribution itself and the partnership approach leading to a much more successful rollout than would otherwise have been the case (Independent Evaluation Group, 2011). Similarly, **Oxfam partnered with Visa in the Philippines to enable simple and efficient money transfers to people in the event of natural disasters, enabling more people to be reached more quickly than would otherwise have been the case (Craeynest, 2018).**

DPs can play a role in promoting partnerships to **help other actors engage effectively** with the state on social protection. For example, in Zambia, the UK and Ireland have supported the Civil Society Social Protection Platform which has assumed a pivotal role in influencing social protection policy; in Benin, Rwanda and South Africa, Belgium has supported building trade union capacity to engage with the state and secure improved social protection; and in Senegal, France has worked on enabling the private sector to play a role in social insurance schemes (Giovannetti et al., 2010).

South-South partnerships can also be of value in the sector. Emerging donors such as Brazil, Chile, India and Mexico have valuable records in developing successful and innovative social protection schemes and have expressed interest in supporting other countries in reproducing their own successes. The latter may well be more prepared to listen to these emerging donors rather than other players, given they have recently implemented their own successful national programmes (Ibid. p.6).

There is also a role for **philanthropists** in social protection partnerships. **For example, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation partnered with the International Labour Organization to create the latter’s Microinsurance Innovation Facility which has in turn supported more than 60 organisations in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean to develop new approaches to**

using insurance to combat vulnerability. These have included new strategies, products, and distribution channels with lessons learned fed back into the industry to improve performance on the ground (Churchill & Matul, 2012, p.30).

5.3.3 Transparency, Accountability, and Focus on Results

Social protection is fundamental to the leave no-one behind agenda, given its goal of providing a safety net. In order to ensure it reaches those who need it most, transparent information is needed on **who these people are**. As recognised in a study by Development Initiatives “in order to eliminate poverty, targeting will need to improve and hence the data on poverty...will need to be strengthened” (Development Initiatives, 2015, p.6). In Benin for example effective data gathering has enabled the identification of the poorest 20% of the population and analysis of how existing social protection initiatives could be tailored to better serve them (OECD, 2018). Similar work has been carried out in Kenya and, as a result, targeting of the national cash transfer scheme was adjusted and new funding brought online to improve water infrastructure and support skills development and scholarships, thus better serving the community’s needs (Ibid.).

Box 3: Leaving No-One Behind in Cambodia

In Cambodia, the Government recognised that knowing who to target was essential in order to make sure that no-one was left behind. It was faced with a social protection “system” that was made up of many fragmented and uncoordinated programmes, each using different criteria to decide who to target. With DPs support, IDPoor was established, a poverty identification mechanism combining a proxy means test (looking at aspects such as household assets) with community-based selection. These criteria were agreed following an extensive consultation that included citizens, civil society and DPs, an approach that has been instrumental in delivering subsequent buy-in for using the system. The data gathered, which is regularly updated, has been used to create a social registry of poor and vulnerable households, the ID Poor Information System, with each household given a special identification card.

The Government then passed a decree requiring that all providers, including DPs and CSOs, use the system when planning and implementing programmes that target the poor. This practical application of ownership, alignment, harmonisation and transparency means that those previously left behind now get access to a much broader package of support. It also results in significant savings for providers who no longer need to each set up their own targeting system.

IDPoor is now being expanded to include details of the various programmes being delivered to target households and a working group is looking at how to increase cooperation between these so as to deliver a truly integrated social protection framework.

[IDPoor, White Kaba et al. \(2018\)](#)

A **close focus on results** is needed in social protection given the heterogeneity of the sector, its beneficiaries’ situations, and the types of support provided. This makes predicting what will work

best in advance particularly difficult. As such a “try it and see” approach often works best which means that reliable monitoring and reporting systems are both “necessary and desirable” (ILO, 2016, p. 42). As the OECD’s 2017 Development Cooperation Report states, good gathering and analysis of data can “allow decision makers to track development progress in real time, improving social protection and the understanding of where existing policies and programmes require adjustment. This presents a tremendous opportunity to gain richer, deeper, timelier insights to complement the data that are being collected through censuses and surveys” (OECD, 2017, p.26). An EU study notes that the success of Latin American conditional cash transfer programmes in general has depended on robust monitoring and continuous impact assessment and adjustment (Giovannetti et al., 2010). These programmes include Plan Jefes y Jefas in Argentina which saw a drop in poverty among participants from 80% to 70% plus the prevention of 10% of participants from falling into extreme poverty, and Progresa-Oportunidades in Mexico which extended across 25% of the population and reduced the poverty gap by 19%.

Credibility is important if social protection programmes are to be successful given that they are aimed at people who may well have been previously excluded from such support and therefore have good reason to doubt that promised new assistance, especially if associated with the state, will materialise in practice. Establishing credibility means transparency, accountability, and focusing on results are key, making it clear who is being targeted, what is being done, why, and what is being achieved. To do this, producing data is not enough - it also needs to be accessible, for example being actively broadcast. In the Indonesian Raskin programme for example, posters listing eligible beneficiaries and programme guidelines were put up in villages to establish trust (OECD, 2018). **Part of the success of the Bolsa Familia initiative in Brazil has been put down to establishing credibility through using the media to show that it is accountable, transparent, fair and has a concrete impact (Lindert et al., 2008).** This programme is notable for its development results, having reduced the poverty gap by 12% between 2001 and 2005 and contributed to a one-third decline in income inequality over the last decade (Giovannetti et al., 2010, p.63). Conversely, where transparency and accountability is absent, so problems can ensue. This was the case in Sierra Leone where the rationale for a scheme providing cash transfers that targeted ex-combatants was not clearly communicated which led to it being perceived by other members of the community as a reward for committing atrocities, thus exacerbating inter-communal tensions (Babajanian et al, 2012).

Monitoring and accountability are also important as social protection programmes are often targeting people in areas where **governance systems are weak** and thus there is scope for leakage. For example, monitoring of the Indonesian Raskin programme which is cited above exposed issues in applying eligibility criteria and the fact that beneficiaries were receiving only a third of the quotas they were supposed to. These findings were passed on to decision-makers and programme design was subsequently evolved into an electronic scheme in partnership with the private sector that is described above (OECD, 2018).

One of the core goals of social protection programmes is to help act as a buffer against extreme uncertainty in beneficiaries’ lives, for example caused by shocks such as the loss of a job, ill health, or a climatic event. Such programmes cannot do this if they themselves suffer from a lack of **predictability**. This means that, as GIZ highlight, “programmes must be adequately funded to ensure regularity and predictability” (Babajanian et al., 2012, p.37). This is highly relevant to cash transfer

schemes which aim to reduce income uncertainty and help poor households plan their expenditure. Academic research on this issue reports that “cash disbursement must be regular so that households can plan; wherever several delays were experienced, the cash transfers were ineffective” (Burchi & Strupat, 2016, p.1). For example, an evaluation of Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Programme noted that key to its success in reducing poverty, improving food security, and protecting assets was that the cash transfers it made were predictable. This helped to avoid “distress migration”, a coping strategy that had previously been common place whereby people moved location in search of food and income with negative long-term consequences for their well-being. Conversely, in the small number of cases where payments were delayed under the programme, it is said to have led to a variety of destructive behaviours such as selling assets and taking on of debt at unsustainable rates (Slater et al., 2006). Finally, ensuring predictability in a state-led programme once again serves the important role of helping to rebuild trust in government and strengthening the social contract between citizen and state.

5.3.4 Microinsurance

Where state-sponsored social insurance is not yet available country-wide or does not address all of people’s needs (as is normally the case in low income countries), microinsurance can be used to bridge the gap. Studies on its impact report that it can achieve “markedly positive results” (De Bock & Ontiveros, 2013, p.12). Experience also shows that **applying the principles to its conception and delivery** is an important part of making sure it delivers.

Partnership is important due to the individual constraints faced by each of the main stakeholders. The state may face capacity limitations that make it hard to deliver by itself. The private sector may not move in to offer microinsurance due to the administrative costs involved in dealing with, and getting information to build risk profiles on, beneficiaries who are not in formal state registration systems and who live on the peripheries of towns and cities in informal settlements. Civil society, including self-help groups, often try to fill the gap by setting up community insurance schemes but are themselves challenged by a lack of technical expertise in policy design, setting contribution rates and investing reserves, leading to management and reliability challenges. Experience and research therefore recommends forming partnerships whereby civil society continue to perform “all the tasks in which low costs, a knowledge of the target group and the latter’s trust are vital including marketing and customer liaison” while the private sector steps in to partner with them and perform those tasks requiring “know-how, stability, and professionalism” such as product design and risk management (Loewe, 2010, p.3).

Ownership is still important however and the state has a role to play in providing regulation and can also act to stimulate demand, subsidise contributions for the poorest and offer incentives for private sector involvement where needed, such as tax breaks. In India for example, government has offered subsidies to the private sector for extending health insurance to workers in the informal economy and also to protect low-income farmers from weather risks and livestock mortality, while in South Africa the state works to persuade private sector insurers to reach under-served market segments (Ibid.). The state also has an important role to play in ensuring accountability and transparency. In Colombia for example, the President promoted microinsurance in the media while in the Philippines the Government sponsors a “Microinsurance Month” each year (Ibid.).

DPs meanwhile can add value by harmonising and aligning their support, providing capacity building assistance and facilitating exchanges of best practice, creating infrastructure such as training centres and conflict resolution organisations, helping with regulation and education, and providing grants for establishing new schemes. They can also help with carrying out analysis and sharing the results which can help schemes evolve and improve (Loewe, 2010).

Thus, in microinsurance applying the principles of ownership, partnership, managing for results and transparency and accountability can bring effective social protection to those who otherwise would remain excluded.

5.4 SDG 13 – Climate Action

SDG 13 aims to “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”. The concrete results that the international community has specified should be targeted under this SDG include integration of climate change measures into national policies, adoption of disaster risk reduction strategies, reduction in the number of people affected by natural disasters, raising awareness and capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning, and the mobilisation of \$100bn a year to address the needs of developing countries

More information is available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg8>

5.4.1 Ownership

Research has highlighted that meeting SDG 13 will demand “not only the mobilisation of substantially more resources for sustainable development, but also a greater focus on their effectiveness, quality and impact” (Greenhill et al., 2015). Ensuring ownership is an essential part of such effectiveness. The SDG itself puts this principle at the centre of efforts for climate action, emphasising the need for ownership in order to ensure the integration of climate change measures into wider national policies, strategies, and planning which is necessary if they are to be sustainable (OECD, 2009). This is due to the effect that policies in other sectors can have on climate change and commonalities between the climate change adaptation agenda and poverty reduction objectives (Richards, 2003). Such an approach also implies then coordinating external support behind integrated national policies to make the best use of scarce resources given the substantial financial requirements for the SDG which amount to trillions of dollars per year (OECD, 2015).

A thematic evaluation of **EU support** endorses the need for such an approach and notes that “there has been significant progress in mainstreaming environment and climate change...especially where there is national ownership” (Particip, 2015a, p.104). It highlights that “EU support has been partnered and demand-driven” (Ibid, p.ii) following an approach of “securing country ownership and embedding low-emission development strategies in current policy and strategy processes”. The evaluation concludes that, using this approach, “significant results have been achieved in all the focus areas of support” (Ibid, p.ii) and that it is also “likely to enhance the sustainability” of what has been achieved (Ibid, p.ii). Similarly, an evaluation of **Australia’s** climate change support in Vietnam, the Pacific and the Solomon Islands concludes that “there are a number of success factors characterising those investments assessed to be more likely to produce significant climate benefits”

including being “linked to partner country priorities with explicit climate or disaster-related outcomes” (DFAT, 2018, p.2).

The correlation of ownership and alignment with results has also been seen on the ground in **Bangladesh**. A joint strategic country evaluation of the development cooperation of Denmark, Sweden and the EU notes that these donors have supported the development of a national policy framework for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and then aligned their work behind this. Following a nationally owned approach has also enabled the mainstreaming of these concepts across other sectors. The report highlights that such new policies have led to “various tangible results in terms of enhanced resilience” including tens of millions benefiting from enhanced warning times and procedures in the event of floods and cyclones (ADE, 2016).

Ownership and alignment have also been critical to the success of the **Climate Risk Early Warning System**, a joint initiative by Australia, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands to improve early warning system capacity in 19 least developed countries and small island developing states. This is reported to have helped to “reduce the impacts of climate change on the most vulnerable countries and people” and “assisted 19 governments in the Pacific and Africa to fulfil their populations’ most critical early warning needs” (WMO, 2018, p.5). Evaluations note that “the initiative has achieved these concrete results because it aligns the technical expertise of its implementing partners [with national policy]” (OECD, 2018, p.123) and because projects “promote ownership by letting countries...lead” (WMO, 2018, p.5), meaning that donors “respond to priority activities articulated by countries” (CREWS Operational Procedures Note No 1, n.d., p.1).

Box 4: Weathering the Storm in the Pacific

Having a robust system for weather forecasting and issuing weather alerts is key to protecting local communities. The Finnish-Pacific Project has seen support provided to 14 countries across the region to address this issue by improving weather forecasts and the alerts that are provided in the event of severe weather as well as by enhancing disaster preparedness at the community level.

An evaluation of the initiative’s work highlights that central to its success has been that “activities were well aligned with regional and national policies and were complementing the work of similar projects and programmes” (Finland, 2018, p.vi). Ownership was promoted both at the national level – by working to enhance the capacity of National Meteorological Services - and at the local level – by working with local communities on carrying out vulnerability assessments. Crucially, it then linked these two levels up through joint development of early warning systems. This saw national meteorological offices communicating directly with local communities for the first time and enabled them to better tailor their forecasts to local needs - for example simplifying terminology and making more use of graphics - as well as encouraging them to diversify the channels they use to transmit forecasts to include Facebook and SMS. As the evaluation notes “The impact potential in terms of reducing their vulnerability to severe events has already been demonstrated when an earthquake struck near the Solomon Islands in 2016. A tsunami warning was issued and directly communicated to the pilot community of Lord Howe. They immediately invoked their disaster response plan and were the first community to evacuate to higher ground.”

[Final Evaluation of the Finnish-Pacific Project, ECO Consult \(2018\)](#)

The thematic evaluation of EU support referenced above also flags **harmonisation** as having been important. It notes that support has been “co-ordinated and complementary to assistance provided by Member States and other donors” (Particip, 2015a, p.ii) which has helped in “reducing fragmentation and creating the potential for more substantial engagement” (Ibid, p.70).

In addition, harmonisation is important in **policy dialogue** in order to provide coherent messaging and support as well as to reduce transaction costs. Such an approach is said to have “led to successful mainstreaming” of climate change in national policies in Bolivia and Egypt for example (Particip, 2015b, p.157) which, as mentioned above, is seen to be crucial in order to deliver results on the ground.

5.4.2 Inclusive Development Partnerships

The global nature of addressing the climate change challenge calls for cooperation given that no one partner or country can solve it alone. Partnerships offer the opportunity to link the resources and skills of diverse actors, both within countries and between the local, national, and international levels.

Given the extensive financing needs under SDG 13, leveraging funds from the **private sector** is essential as public finance and aid simply will not be enough to meet needs. Developed countries have therefore committed to mobilise \$100 billion annually by 2020 for climate action in developing countries (UNFCCC, 2009), setting up new funds to do so that seek to bring in private sector financing. In addition to funding, such partnerships can also leverage private sector know-how and innovation to tackle technical problems.

The Green Climate Fund under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change combines funding from both donors and the private sector to support low-emission and climate resilient projects in developing countries. Its dedicated Private Sector Facility engages with companies, pension funds and capital markets to source financing, allowing significant amounts of additional resources to be mobilised and then used in a coordinated fashion alongside donor funds (Green Climate Fund, 2019). This is the case with its commitment of \$86 million for a hydropower project in the Solomon Islands for example, in recognition of the substantial contribution the project will make to climate change efforts (DFAT, 2017, p.7).

The **IFC-Canada Climate Change Program** promotes private sector financing for clean energy projects. (IFC, 2019). By merging their own funds with those of the private sector, projects are facilitated that “would not otherwise happen, due to market barriers preventing sponsors or other financiers from making those investments” (IFC-Canada Climate Change Programme, 2019). As such partnership is used to lower risk and make climate-impactful projects more investable for the private sector. The Program has to date succeeded in leveraging over \$1bn.

The **InsuResilience** Global Partnership for Climate and Disaster Risk Finance and Insurance brings together donors, the private sector, and civil society along with other stakeholders to strengthen the resilience of developing countries and to protect the lives and livelihoods of poor and vulnerable people against the impacts of disasters, making use of new finance and insurance solutions to do so

which themselves utilise private sector funding and expertise. Results have included the creation of regional risk pools in the Caribbean and Central America, Africa, and the Pacific which have provided substantial payouts after member countries were hit by natural disasters, significantly cushioning the shock (InsuResilience, 2018, p.8).

Partnership with the private sector can also take the form of encouraging them to **adjust their business activities** to be more climate-friendly. For example, the UN Climate Change's Climate Neutral Now initiative invites companies to measure their emissions, reduce what they can, and voluntarily compensate for the remainder with "Certified Emission Reductions". Around 150 organizations and companies had signed up by 2017 including major players such as Aviva, BNP Paribas, Marks & Spencer, Microsoft, and Sony. By August 2018, the programme was reported to have prevented 34 million tonnes of emissions from entering the atmosphere (UNFCCC, 2019).

Civil society has an important advocacy and watchdog role to play and, in addition, can act as an effective implementer itself due to its on the ground reach and local knowledge. In terms of involvement in planning, the success of the Finnish-Pacific Project is reported to be in part due to a partnership approach that saw local government engaging "directly with communities through participation in community vulnerability assessments and subsequent development of community early warning systems and disaster response plans" (Finland, 2018, p.vi) thereby ensuring that these were better tailored to the local environment and gained the buy-in of the intended beneficiaries.

In terms of involvement in implementation, the joint strategic country evaluation of the development cooperation of Denmark, Sweden and the EU with Bangladesh reports that that a range of civil society organisations has taken an active part in the implementation of climate change interventions "often in the form of community based organisations providing both services" (ADE, 2016, p.31) and that this approach contributed to the success of initiatives which "significantly contributed to reducing vulnerability, especially in relation to floods and cyclones" (Ibid, p.70).

Similarly, partnership for implementation was central to the success of the Climate Adapted Local Development and Innovation Project which was supported by Luxembourg in Vietnam and aimed to protect livelihoods and strengthen resilience to climate change. This involved "strong networks and partnerships between communities, local government and civil society" which are said to have "led to clear implementation responsibilities and joint coordinated action" (OECD, 2018, p.18). This in turn facilitated "sustainable, equitable and efficient trends of poverty reduction and adaptation to climate change" (Jacquemin & Hung, 2018) as beneficiaries were equipped with the skills, knowledge and productive resources needed to deal with the issue.

Donors can also usefully partner with civil society in terms of supporting them to promote community engagement. Given civil society's local roots, they can be of particular value in raising awareness on climate change issues, often a critical point in rural areas if buy-in is to be gained for the changes needed to tackle them. **For example, Irish Aid supported civil society to work with government on community education and access to information on climate change in Mozambique (Irish Aid, 2017). It also gave support for civil society to work with citizens to encourage their participation in government processes to plan, implement, and monitor climate change activities. This included the establishment of development observatories which have played "an important role in contributing to government accountability and transparency, providing an opportunity for all**

stakeholders in the provinces to come together to review Government plans and results” ([Irish Aid, 2017, p.43](#)).

5.4.3 Transparency, Accountability, and Focus on Results

Good data and effective transmission of it is essential to **incentivise action** on climate change and to make informed decisions on what needs to be done. As the UN point out, “baseline climate data and projections of future climate change are needed to define the nature and magnitude of climate risks, and to evaluate adaptive options required to manage such risks” (UNDP, UNEP, GEF, n.d.). This is especially important given the fluid nature of the sector and the fact that it involves many different actors. This is applicable not only at the country level but also for organisations, companies, and individuals, for example publicising carbon footprints and ways that they can be reduced in order to incentivise action.

Partnerships can be an effective way of getting the right data to the right people. For example, a range of donors including Canada and the Netherlands support the Caribbean Weather Impacts Group which reprocesses available data so that it is relevant for use in the Caribbean region and then passes this on to respective governments where it has proven to be a useful tool for decision-making (Caribbean Community Climate Change Center, 2019).

Once actions are agreed, publication of information on who is doing what, where is needed, nudging actors to meet their commitments through mutual accountability. This is recognised in the Paris Agreement which stipulates that “states should regularly communicate their priorities, support needs, plans and activities in the field of adaptation” (Article 7, para 10.11). This is also particularly important for emissions information to check whether targets are being met. The Agreement stresses that such information should be publicly available and used to facilitate a global stocktake of countries’ climate outputs to promote accountability. Such transparency can be used as both a stick and a carrot, for example the Global Climate Action portal (<http://climateaction.unfccc.int/>) allows stakeholders from around the globe to show off what they are doing to make a positive impact.

Transparency is also important in **policy-making** at the international level to maintain buy-in from partner countries who have signed up to the Paris Agreement, given that they will be the ones who have to implement and sell the policy in their home countries.

With a wide variety of financing channels, **predictability** becomes particularly important in order to coordinate them well and thus fully leverage their potential. As the OECD notes, “ensuring predictability of support for climate and sustainable development, enables longer term planning at the national level” (OECD, 2017, p. 24). For example, in Mozambique, IrishAid’s good performance on predictability has allowed more effective multi-annual planning and coordination with other stakeholders (Irish Aid, 2017).

Climate change is a global problem that no one country is responsible for, or can solve, alone. It does not respect national borders and the actions of one country can negatively affect another, making it distinct from “nationally contained” sectors such as health or education. Collective, coherent global action is therefore needed which means a **set of agreed results** to target, which have indeed been

provided under the Paris Agreement. This gives the various funds and programmes on climate change a common set of goals to centre their work around.

Focusing on results is also important in terms of monitoring what is achieved and using this to guide future financing allocation decisions so that funds are channelled to where they can have the highest impact. For example, Switzerland uses annual results reports to determine the extent to which the programmes and projects have achieved their objectives on climate change and to subsequently “steer its interventions in an efficient manner” (SDC, 2016, p.7).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Applying the development effectiveness principles (when done right) leads to better development results

The findings set out in this study show a strong correlation with results if the principles are applied appropriately. As mentioned above, direct *causation* is however almost impossible to prove given the lack of examples where one can examine exactly the same scenario with one or more of the principles not applied and then applied.

More research is recommended to provide further examples as well as designing new projects and programmes which specifically seek to assess the principles’ link with results. As mentioned above, to date there has been far too much focus on measuring whether they have been applied or not as opposed to looking at the results that they have contributed to. This has also made sourcing data particularly labour intensive-given the need to sift through large numbers of reports and studies which are not explicitly focused on this issue in the hope that they provide useful data.

6.2 There is a clear role for the principles in the development cooperation ecosystem

The principles have a natural slot in the development cooperation ecosystem, complementing the SDGs which provide the overall goals and the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action which targets the means. The principles provide the missing link, namely how to use the means to achieve the goals. As seen above, it is perfectly possible to spend money on admirable goals in an inefficient, ineffective, and even harmful way and therefore “how you spend it” has a significant influence on what is achieved.

6.3 The principles therefore should continue to be promoted

Given the link between the principles and development results and the waning focus on them, there is a clear rationale for increasing efforts to promote their use. The changing development landscape only reinforces this need as fragmentation of providers (many with little exposure to the principles), new ways of working, and increased partnership with entities other than central governments in partner countries mean that there is an increasing risk of development cooperation not being owned, aligned, harmonised, accountable or focused on results. In parallel, the ambitious aims of the SDGs mean that using limited resources as effectively as possible is essential.

6.4 But business as usual is not recommended

The above is not a call to continue pursuing the principles in the same way as before however. The previous focus on application rather than results has led to the irony of the principles being applied ineffectively in a number of cases, that is to say without leading to improved results. This in turn has damaged the legitimacy of the development effectiveness movement, leading it to be associated in some quarters with box-ticking, form as opposed to function, and understandably therefore provoking a degree of “development effectiveness fatigue” from both partner countries and those providing support. Practices such as insisting that DPs’ priorities feature in national plans or cherry picking from them at will to claim ownership and alignment, designing joint programmes that include a plethora of conditionalities and reporting requirements to satisfy each participant and so become less efficient than bilateral working, participating in coordination fora that do not change anything or follow up on decisions, and entering data into aid management information systems that are not used for decision making all need to be removed from the definition of development effectiveness. Instead, efforts are needed to re-establish the idea that it means finding ways of doing development cooperation that cost less and deliver more on the ground.

6.5 More “serving suggestions” are necessary

The above implies a need for more sharing of what works on the ground. However, generic appeals to establish “inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships”, “ensure that robust accountability measures are in place”, or “align with the national development strategy” are not news to anyone in the development community and are not particularly helpful given that it is possible to do all of these things in the wrong way, that is to say in a manner that does not make development cooperation more effective. What is needed instead are *specific* examples and advice on how to achieve these worthy goals in practice.

6.6 Learning to Learn

There are many examples of what works already out there but, unfortunately, a lot of them are not being effectively shared. The assessment of 40 evaluations in education referenced above for example notes that “many of the lessons of what works in aid to education are known, but they are not implemented” (Riddell & Niño Zarazúa, 2015, p.32). They are “known” in the sense that they feature in a lengthy evaluation report which, it would appear, has a very limited readership that does not extend to the designers of successor programmes. This can be surmised as the assessment finds the same lessons learned repeated in the evaluations of similar programmes over time. This is unfortunately not a failing restricted to the education sector; a study on complexity and context in development finds that the major challenge in improving effectiveness is in fact not in acquiring new insights but rather in “enabling and encouraging organizations to act on existing knowledge” (Samof et al., 2016, p.94). How learning is “done” in development thus needs revision to ensure that lessons learned get passed on to designers and implementers of new projects and programmes in an easily digestible form. They simply cannot be expected to trawl through hundreds of lengthy past evaluations to discover them. Websites with compendia of these documents sitting on them in pdf form do not solve the problem. A stark example is the World Bank finding that a third of their reports which aim to inform policy have never been downloaded from their website, and nearly 90 percent have never been cited (Doemland & Trevino, 2014). This is not wholly surprising given the time and effort that this would involve.

What is needed instead is akin to a website where one could enter a search query regarding the kind of initiative planned and then be presented with a concise list of the main findings from previous studies and evaluations of similar initiatives. Advances in the legal field potentially offer some hope here. They have faced a similar issue – the need to access findings buried in hundreds or thousands of lengthy papers covering past cases and rulings – and previously tackled it by “throwing large numbers of bodies at huge stacks of paperwork” (The Economist, June 12th 2018, p.21). They are now instead starting to use machine learning and artificial intelligence to scan through the documents instead, with algorithms primed to pinpoint relevant content and flag it to a supervising human. The time spent on document review is reported to have fallen by 80% in some cases as a result (Ibid.). Among law firms such an approach means accessing knowledge faster and more cheaply, while in development it could make the difference between accessing knowledge or not accessing it at all. Building this kind of functionality into the knowledgebase being established by the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation that aims to showcase successful application of the development effectiveness principles on the ground is therefore to be recommended.

6.7 There is a need to learn to fail

Getting good practices effectively shared needs to be combined with acknowledging, and learning from, what does *not* work. This often teaches even more about how to proceed in future and publicising such negative experiences along with the success stories adds credibility to the latter as there is less risk that they will be seen as just a public relations exercise. This is particularly important in the development effectiveness field given the number of ineffective initiatives that have continued to be promoted in its name. Such learning from failure is already being embraced by some in the development world such as Engineers Without Borders who publish an annual Failure Report setting out what has not worked and the lessons that can be learned from it.

Learning from others’ reported failures needs to be combined with learning from one’s own in real-time. Even with all the good and bad examples available, the designers of a new initiative still do not have all the information they need to guarantee success given the number of variables involved and the fact that every situation is different. As such, a different approach to implementation is needed, moving away from the blueprint style and instead towards one which has less initial planning, an earlier start to implementation, and more subsequent adjustment in light of the experiences on the ground. Such a trial and error approach is already well-established in the private sector, particularly among technology firms and venture capitalists. It requires more flexibility and feedback, analysing what is and what is not working and adjusting plans accordingly.

Such “try it and see” approaches are gaining some traction with the advent of the Doing Development Differently and Problem Driven Iterative Approaches that are receiving an increasing amount of publicity. These “blend design and implementation through rapid cycles of planning, action, reflection and revision” and so aim to “not be constrained by pre-designed plans”, committing to “adjust course if, during implementation, it becomes apparent that doing something else would be more useful” (Michel, 2016, p.23). For example, in Myanmar, Denmark has adopted the concept of “Real Time Evaluation” for its coastal fisheries work, with a permanent, on-site dedicated team to evaluate how things are going “concurrent with the development intervention” which is “making it possible to provide feed-back to operational management during

implementation” (DANIDA, 2016, p.3). There also appears to now be a welcome trend among philanthropists to take increasing risks in their development spending, adopting a similar approach to the private sector risk-taking and innovation that often led to their original business success. For example, the Open Philanthropy Project has shown a willingness to back ventures for which there are significant risks if the potential benefits seem big enough. The rest of the development sector could do well to emulate this.

6.8 Do sweat the small stuff

Learning from past practical experiences and from one’s own successes and failures often throws up small tweaks that can be made with impressive results, in other words the often neglected “small stuff” can be instrumental in making the difference between success and failure. This is not to say that larger complex and structural problems do not exist but that there are also plenty of quick fixes available to many issues that can also help build momentum to tackling these more thorny issues.

For example, where an aid information management system is not being updated, experience shows that putting together a regular public report based on its data or publicly ranking the quality of information provided by each DP can make a significant difference; ineffective sector working groups can be boosted by agreeing core deliverables for them such as filling funding gaps and joining up analysis, tracking their achievement of these, and making sure they have secretariats to support them; a general failure of DPs to meet commitments on alignment and harmonisation can be addressed by signing an MoU or similar with them containing specific, measurable commitments and indicators – for example on sector spread or giving financial floors for bilateral working – and measuring these publicly on an annual basis, scoring each DP; cherry-picking from national strategies to claim ownership and alignment can be countered by providing a gap analysis showing exactly where external support is required within a prioritised national strategy and mandating that external providers stick to choosing from this menu; non-inclusive or unwieldy coordination structures can be addressed by following a representative model with elected constituency representatives.

In a similar vein, simple fixes like speeding up delivery of development cooperation (a separate issue from being predictable) or having a local presence in country (something that many new providers do not) can make a very significant difference to ownership, harmonisation, alignment, transparency, accountability and, ultimately, results, and are among the most frequent requests of partner country governments when asked what would make development cooperation more effective in practice.

6.9 Think about incentives

Every development cooperation actor will be influenced by a variety of different incentives in their work in addition to achieving results, not all of them necessarily benign. This means that even when lessons are learned and got into the right hands, it may not be enough to deliver change. Public perception and organisational prestige are some of the most powerful motivators for organisational behaviour and should be accepted as such and co-opted to encourage more focus on results. In today’s world where rankings and ratings have been used to revolutionise everything from retail to real estate to restaurants and have drastically improved efficiency, effectiveness, and customer service in the process, it is high time that such an approach is also applied to development, putting the already well-accepted concepts of transparency, accountability and focusing on results into a

more modern and effective form of practice. This would play on organisations' natural tendency to focus on how they are perceived and ranked among their peers and their desire for public validation. Or, to take a less Machiavellian view, it would allow them to see where they need to improve and how it might be done in practice by providing examples that they could emulate.

Incentives feature in a number of the examples provided in the preceding sub-section, for example on encouraging data entry into aid information management systems or adherence to commitments at country level, but they can also work at the more macro scale. The UK for example undertakes periodic reviews of multilateral organisations and adjusts its funding to them accordingly (DFID, 2016). Applying standardised rankings and rating to such organisations by those who fund them and then using the results to decide who to finance could have a dramatic impact on performance. Similarly, in the philanthropic sector, GiveWell rank potential civil society recipients of funds by how well they have proved they can deliver. A wider uptake of this kind of standardised system could be envisaged to provide performance metrics for a variety of development financiers, akin to the World Bank's Doing Business rankings, and used to help guide donor funds to where they will be best used to deliver results while also creating incentives for performance improvements. The crucial difference between something like an OECD Peer Review and a Doing Business Ranking is that the latter provides an easily digestible and transparent comparison, something that will therefore be focused on by peers, public, and press, the opinions of whom decision makers tend to take notice of.

6.10 It's all about the results

The above leads to one clear conclusion about ranking the principles themselves - that focus on results is the most important. This should be applied to any work that is done in the name of development effectiveness, asking what it actually changed on the ground, how it made things better, improved impacts or saved resources. A close second would be transparency – good data is essential for finding out whether results have been achieved and incentivising action for change. These two principles have become even more important in the SDG era where new actors and ways of working have heightened the need for rigorously focusing on what works and combining resources effectively in order to meet what are very ambitious goals.

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