



Implementing the Results Agenda

A QUICK REVIEW OF KEY TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

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SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

Results have the potential to transform the way development programmes are designed, delivered and evaluated, as well as the prospects of changing the way development partners think and act. Results are also a way of improving the value for money of aid and a means of promoting accountability to those who fund and invest in aid programmes.

While there are many practical constraints to putting in place a consistent results approach at the agency level, there are emerging areas of common practice. These are:

- Results frameworks that extend from the project level up to the corporate level, underpinned by one or more theories of change.
- The notion of a theory of change refers to a tool used to design, implement and evaluate programmes and to adjust the mid-course of a project as appropriate. Theories of change help in attributing results at the project level and in assessing the agency contribution to results at higher levels of aggregation.
- Standardised or core sector indicators that are rolled out at the programme level help to consistently capture results at the sector, and in some cases, the thematic levels, e.g. jobs. Core indicators help in counting results across complex environments, but they should not lead to overly rigid frameworks. Adaptation to local context remains key.

- Investment in data and evidence is fundamental to a results approach. Investing in data generation and capture, whether directly through programmes or via investment in 'monitoring partners', is a vital accompaniment to better results. Use of new technology – from interactive web platforms to multi-media tools – has the potential to shorten feedback loops between beneficiaries, partners and funders.
- Partner-led approaches need to be underpinned with a clear theory of change and a clear vision of shared outcomes (and related indicators) that support consistent reporting, transparency and effective evaluation. Capacity support is also vital for partner organisations working in data-poor and difficult geographies.
- While high technical standards and systems are a necessary constituent of effective evaluation and development results, what makes these systems and procedures effective is the organisational culture. Organisational cultures that support learning and knowledge sharing with a commitment to transparency are vital building blocks for achieving and managing for results. Clear and consistent leadership from top senior management is also essential, from setting out a strategic vision to creating a safe organisational environment in which both positive and negative performance can be openly discussed.

A consistent finding across almost all results studies is that organisational procedures and systems for achieving results need to be seen as dynamic, not static. There is no single solution, but rather systems that need to be introduced, used, tested, reviewed and then updated in a rolling cycle (Itad/CMI 2014). While common definitions, core indicators, guidance and training are all vital elements of a comprehensive results system, there needs to be an element of ongoing learning, review and adaptation if such systems are to continue to perform well. A results-focused culture must integrate course-correction methods, acknowledging successes and failures and adjusting resources accordingly. Results approaches that lock agencies into rigid procedures and processes tend to come unstuck.

INTRODUCTION

Results are what development is all about. Results have the potential to transform how development programmes are designed, delivered and evaluated, as well as the prospects of changing the way development partners think and act. Results are also a way of improving the value for money of aid and a means of promoting accountability to those who fund and invest in aid programmes.

Results are not new. Log-frames and M&E systems have been in place for decades, showing how spending on project activities is expected to lead ultimately to development outcomes. Today, however, the focus on results is a lot more wide-ranging and takes in a lot more complexity, including the fact that many of the challenges in development require solutions that go beyond aid and beyond the standard instruments of development agencies. The global dialogue on the post-2015 goals is likely to stretch the results agenda¹ even further, placing further demands on development actors – both domestic and international – to measure progress towards goals and targets and to be accountable for their commitments. The purpose of this paper is to take a snapshot of current practice, focusing on the ways in which development agencies are taking forward the results agenda, managing some of the tensions involved and finding ways to present results to satisfy the need for accountability while also addressing the need to transform development efforts overall.



Results are not new.

RESULTS: SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

First and foremost, results are an opportunity to transform the way things are done in development:

- Results have the potential to shift the focus from means to ends and then back again to the means, which some have termed working backwards, not forwards (Wagstaff 2011). A results focus opens up the possibility of different ways of doing things, supporting innovation and learning from mistakes, but only if the authorising environment within an agency is wired to support such behaviours.
- A results focus reinforces the importance of understanding HOW change happens, the centrality of the theory of change² and the importance of making adaptations if assumptions do not hold and conditions change. Theories of change are an increasingly essential element of the toolkit for programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Ensuring evaluation through theories of change is fundamental to generating better results information.
- Telling the story of results requires more and better data and better evidence. In an environment where development agencies are working increasingly with and through partners and are reliant on national and local data systems, the results focus brings to the fore the importance of investment and capacity support for statistical bodies, research and evaluation functions within partner countries.

- Finally, results place a premium on knowledge and put effective knowledge management at the centre of how development actors operate (Wagstaff 2011). Knowing what is known and communicating it is a vital function for development agencies as they work with in-country partners and shape their own strategies and programmes. Results put knowledge and the importance of being an intelligent consumer of knowledge at the heart of the development enterprise.



Results are an opportunity to transform the way things are done in development.

For the development community, results have become part of a much wider management agenda that seeks to test whether institutions, policies and programmes are working effectively and to determine what can be done to improve future performance (OECD/DAC 2013). 'Managing for development results' (MfDR), a term which entered the debate in and around 2003, makes it clear that results are not just a matter for donors but are a concern for all parties engaged in development. This makes it essential for development agencies to make clear not only how they are measuring and managing results, but also how they are supporting partner countries and other stakeholder groups in doing the same.

TAKING THE AGENDA FORWARD

However much agreement there is on the importance of results, in reality the implementation of results-based approaches by development agencies has not been straightforward. As time goes by it is also increasingly evident that what appears to be one results agenda in fact consists of multiple sub-agendas. Barder (2012) identifies four such 'sub'-agendas:

- **Using results to justify aid to taxpayers.** This is the agenda we hear most often, and it is linked to the increased pressure from domestic political constituencies for accountability from aid ministries and spending departments.
- **Using results to improve aid.** The focus here is on getting the greatest possible benefits from aid through better evidence regarding what works and what does not work. Aid should be allocated to the programmes and projects with the greatest impacts.
- **Using results to manage aid agencies.** Results help limit mission creep and focuses activities in areas where the agency has a demonstrated competency and track record.
- **Using results to manage complexity.** Results help actors focus on 'the prize' rather than the specific means of getting there. Results help to simplify processes, which is important in complex systems, where problems are solved through iterative learning and adaptation.

While these agendas lead broadly in the same direction, they do not (as Barder observes) always have the same destination (ibid.). Focusing on results with a desire to improve the quality of aid or focusing on results principally to increase accountability to taxpayers can lead to a differential focus on building cultures of reporting versus more deep-seated organisational change. In the first case there is a need to rewire organisational cultures to shift resources around flexibly, based on evidence of 'what works'. In the second case there is the possibility that tools for counting results are added on top of everything else that agencies already monitor, without the prospect of deeper organisational change.



In reality the implementation of results-based approaches by development agencies has not been straightforward.

Although not trade-offs as such, striking a balance between these agendas is important if results are to transform how agencies perform as well as report. The existential risk is that agency efforts to focus on results end up falling between stools, making it extremely important that agencies know exactly what they are trying to achieve and why from their approach to results and that they build a coherent vision of how the results agenda will drive better decisions and better programming for the ultimate beneficiaries of aid.

PRACTICAL ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS

As agencies respond to the results challenge, a number of issues and constraints have come to the fore. Many of these were summarised in a recent brief prepared by the OECD/DAC based on an online survey of donor responses. Table 1 summarises the main issues.

Table 1: Implementation Challenges

PURPOSE OF RESULTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS	MEASURING RESULTS	USING RESULTS INFORMATION
Competing/balancing demands: accounting versus learning, differing needs of various stakeholders	Programme quality-at-entry: missing baselines, unclear results, inappropriate indicators, missing links in the results chain, inadequate data collection	Learning gaps: lack of incentives to learn from success and failure using results information to change strategies and policies
Political barriers: selective use of evidence to confirm already held decisions or opinions; confirmation bias; evidence not driving decisions	Data systems: availability, reliability, timeliness and management of data at country level; inadequate data collection infrastructures and capacities	Weak alignment: especially with national planning and budget cycles; weak links of results information between line ministries in partner countries
Resistance: fear that a lack of results will cut funding or skew priorities away from areas we care about	Attribution: reliably measuring effects beyond outputs and attributing to specific support	Accountability: Results viewed as a requirement, not a management tool, and partner country results reporting exclusively prepared for donor reporting
Aggregating data in order to tell a consistent performance story	Measurement bias: measuring what can be measured versus what needs to be measured; little analysis of what is not achieved along with what is achieved	Results frameworks: difficulties in keeping results frameworks simple while maintaining their usefulness as a management tool; difficulties linking budget/resource allocation to results information

Source: OECD/DAC (2013)

Despite the obvious difficulties, most DAC agencies are heavily engaged in rolling out results-based approaches. How this is being done is partly captured by the following data from the same online survey:

- Out of 28 DAC members, almost all track results at the project and programme level, with two-thirds tracking outcomes at the programme level. Twenty-two stated that they aggregate data to measure results at the sector level, with about half measuring to outcome level. Eighteen members aggregate information at the country level, with half tracking to outcome level. 75% of members produce an agency-wide results report, with around half of members aggregating to outcome level and just two aggregating to impact level.
- In terms of institutional arrangements for results management, 21 members claimed to have specific units dealing with results monitoring and measurement. Those that did not noted that this was the responsibility of thematic or regional departments, embassies or implementing partners. In one case 'results resource people' are positioned across the organisation, with responsibility lying mainly with programme managers. In cases where agency operations are decentralised, members noted the importance of having staff in embassies with results management capacities in order to engage effectively with other development actors in tracking and achieving results on the ground.
- Eleven members made reporting to parliament or the domestic legislature as the first priority in using results information, with external communication the next most important priority. The rest set the priority as tracking progress (at all levels) and informing better decision-making.

Taking results seriously requires changes in organisational cultures and incentives to promote learning and knowledge sharing about results.

Of the many implementation challenges highlighted in Table 1, DAC members put most of their emphasis on the following:

- Incomplete results frameworks due to the lack of reliable data, unclear baselines, and missing and/or appropriate indicators.
- Problems in making explicit the causative pathways that lead to results and that explain the attribution or contribution of ODA to development results.
- Problems in systematically linking results to decision-making processes and budgets, and the absence of feedback loops to ensure corrective action during the programme cycle.
- Difficulties in keeping results frameworks simple while maintaining their usefulness as a management tool.
- Results approaches seen by partners as a requirement or imposition rather than a management tool.

Practical responses to these challenges vary across agencies. Increasingly, however, agencies are investing in results frameworks and their underlying theories of change, as well as finding ways of handling the attribution problem. There is also growing recognition that taking results seriously means more than adding processes and procedures on to existing ones, and that it requires changes in organisational cultures and incentives to promote learning and knowledge sharing about results.

The next section goes through some of the main approaches for managing results before providing a snapshot of experience with results-based approaches in two development agencies and one foundation – DfID, World Bank and the Rockefeller Foundation.

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Results Frameworks

Results frameworks are an essential part of the development toolkit today. Their evolution has been presented consistently within the larger scheme of implementing the MfDR approach and the broader aid effectiveness agenda. They do not all look the same or use the same terminology – logic models, results chains and results matrices are similar formulations – but what they all seek to do is capture the ‘essential elements of the logical and expected cause-effect relationships among inputs, outputs, intermediate results or outcomes, and impact’ (World Bank 2012).

There are many debates, and some controversy, on the distinctions between outputs, outcomes, and impact. One agency’s output can be another’s intermediate outcome or even final outcome. Whatever is the case, the key distinction to keep in mind when constructing a results framework is that between the provision of goods and services (output/supply-side) and the short- and long-term benefits and behaviour changes that accrue as a result of these goods and services (outcomes/impact/demand-side).

A well-constructed results framework is valuable for monitoring, management, and evaluation in several ways:

It helps focus on specific outcomes. A well-conceived results framework clearly outlines the ultimate objectives of the project, program, or strategy, rather than simply listing implementation activities, processes, and inputs (World Bank 2012).

It highlights the key linkages in the theory of change that underpin the intervention.

A simple but clear results framework engages constituents in thinking about the channels through which change will occur and to identify key assumptions about that change process. A robust theory of change can also aid learning during implementation and help with adaptation to ensure key results are achieved (Box 1).

It provides an opportunity to build consensus and ownership around shared objectives, not only within an agency but also, and more broadly, with host-country representatives, partners, and stakeholders (USAID 2010).

It builds the foundation for an evidence-based approach to monitoring and evaluation. A clear, evidence-based intervention logic can be both monitored and tested in an evaluation. Results frameworks help to strengthen the ability to evaluate interventions by ensuring a clear theory of change right from the programming phase.

It is a useful management and communication tool, with programme implementation assessed in direct relationship to progress in achieving results, at the outputs, outcomes, and impact levels (World Bank 2012), as well as providing opportunities to communicate a programme's/strategy's key intent and content succinctly (USAID 2010).

BOX 1: COMMON UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE THEORY OF CHANGE

There is no single definition of what a theory of change is and no set methodology. At its most fundamental, a theory of change is about articulating the many stages, steps and assumptions about how change will happen in a programme. While there is no template as such, some consensus does exist around the essential elements of a theory of change. These are:

Context: what is the situation the programme is faced with and seeking to influence?

Long-term change: who will the programme benefit ultimately, and with what desired change?

Sequence/process of change: what are the steps in the process of achieving the desired change?

Assumptions: how will change happen, and what lies inside or outside the influence of the programme?

As Vogel (2012) points out in a review of how theories of change are being put to use by development agencies, theories of change are best thought of as a 'way of thinking' that builds on flexibility and doesn't shy away from uncertainty. Theories of change are a potentially powerful tool for improving programme design, implementation and evaluation, but they also need an authorising environment which supports critical thinking, engagement with research-based evidence, feedback and an openness to redesign and mid-course correction as change happens on the ground.

Source: Vogel (2012)

Results frameworks exist at multiple levels within an organisation. Their main use is at the project and programme level, where applying a causal logic to the results chain is relatively straightforward. Increasingly they are being used to collate and communicate agency-wide results, where the causal linkages can be considerably less certain and precise.

A recent EC study shows the increased adoption by agencies of the four-tier corporate results framework (EuropeAid 2013):

Level 1: background data on progress in economic development at the global or regional level, with reference to the MDGs.

Level 2: agency level results in its areas of intervention expressed in terms of outputs and intermediate outcomes.

Level 3: agency operational effectiveness, i.e. how well its operations are managed, including portfolio quality and M&E.

Level 4: broad indicators of organisational efficiency, i.e. how well the organisation is performing in its core business functions (Box 2).

**BOX 2: EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS:
CLARIFYING THE TERMINOLOGY**

Most four-tier results frameworks include both measures of 'operational effectiveness' and 'organisational efficiency', sometimes also referred to as 'organisational effectiveness'. But what is the distinction behind these terms? According to Michael Porter, the Harvard Business School Professor who coined the term, operational effectiveness refers to that domain of organizational activity that is about having functions that work well. These functions must fit together and work in conjunction with each other to implement strategy. Operational effectiveness involves any number of practices that enable an organization to better utilize its resources and better implement its processes. In other words, operational effectiveness is about continuously improving functional performance.

In most of the corporate results frameworks operated by development agencies, however, operational effectiveness refers more specifically to the management and performance of frontline operations, measured inter alia in terms of portfolio quality and pipeline delivery. Organisational efficiency or effectiveness, on the other hand, covers those core business functions that support frontline delivery and performance, such as finance, human resources and procurement. This effectively creates two tiers of reporting, one focusing outwards (to operations) and the other inwards (to business processes).

Although some corporate results frameworks were initially designed for external accountability and others for internal performance management, the EC study notes that the two functions are increasingly being merged, as agencies find ways to satisfy demands from multiple constituencies.

For almost all agencies the agency-wide results framework is a work in progress. While they offer a structured framework for ongoing reporting and a clear focus for upward accountability and performance management, ongoing challenges include finding appropriate measures for longer-term institutional outcomes (less amenable to simple quantitative indicators) and finding ways to reliably measure agency-specific results in an environment where development is a collective effort and in which partners are often the main channels for implementation (the attribution vs. contribution problem). Other challenges include overcoming the tendency towards short-termism and rigidity once the framework is in place and finding a methodology for aggregating results from highly dispersed and sometimes unstable geographies. How three different organisations have tackled these challenges is discussed in the next section.



Attributing results is a complex exercise.

Attribution or contribution

In recent years there has been a clear move towards attributing development results to specific interventions. In strict evaluation terms, attribution implies causation and involves drawing direct causal links and explanatory conclusions about the relationship between observed changes and specific interventions. The burgeoning of quantitative impact evaluation methods in development is clear evidence of intensified efforts to prove what works, where and why. But attribution is also being attempted beyond the intervention level, as donors attempt to lay claim to results that are linked to their own spending and efforts, as distinct from the spending and efforts of others.

Attributing results is a complex exercise, not least because in general terms observed changes are only partly caused by the intervention of interest, while unplanned events and general change processes often influence the way in which development happens. For example, assessing the impact of a microfinance intervention on poverty requires finding ways to control for a large number of influences, including changing market conditions, infrastructure developments, and climate or disaster-related shocks, as well as the presence of other actors and other programmes.

One way of tackling this complexity is to break down policy processes or interventions into their 'active ingredients' (NONIE 2009). Unpacking in this way allows for a focus on the specific components of change and testing them accordingly. For example, school reform is a large and sometimes unwieldy agenda, but within it are specific components – vouchers or performance incentives – for which there is an explicit theory of change that can be tested for attributable results.



An alternative to attribution is to focus solely on contribution.

Attempting to attribute results where these workable components are unclear or where there is not a clear theory of change (and a shared ToC in the case of partners) is extremely problematic. This is particularly the case at higher levels of aggregation, where the causal links between agency inputs, outputs and outcomes are often less conceptually clear. Some donors (such as DFID) have broached this problem by linking their spending on a particular programme to a set of standardised results indicators that assume, other things being equal, that measured results would not have occurred without the DFID programme. By pro-rating results to the level of funding, DFID is able to aggregate all its results for a particular type of programme (e.g. school retention) across different geographies. DFID is thus able to calculate the benefit of its spending agency-wide. This is plausible, particularly where the funder has real scale and represents a large part of overall programme spending. But it does rely on the assumption that there is a more or less linear causal pathway between spending and outcomes, and that it is justified to pro-rate results to a single development partner even in the presence of multiple partners and stakeholders. As it is, the pro-rating approach can only account for a sub-set of what DFID is actually doing in-country, and even less so through the multilateral system. Building a fuller picture requires a combination of country, regional and multilateral agency results, not all of which can be easily handled in a single results framework.

An alternative to attribution is to focus solely on contribution. Contribution means measuring whether an intervention or programme helped or contributed to observed outcomes instead of trying to measure whether an intervention caused the observed outcomes. The critical test for a development partner using contribution analysis can be framed as:

- Is the programme contributing to the outcomes of interest?
- Are the outcomes of interest changing?
- Is there evidence that the programme helped achieved changes in the outcomes of interest? (Almquist 2011: 4)

Contribution analysis is well established in evaluation terms, draws on a range of methodologies – both quantitative and qualitative – and provides a highly pragmatic solution to the problem of linking results to agency programming. Multilateral agencies generally use this approach because of the way they work with partner governments, claiming not a specific set of agency results but instead country- or sector-wide results to which the agency contributed.

But even here there is the challenge of over- or under-claiming, depending on the scale of agency effort and the number of partners involved. Interestingly, in the social impact world, there are efforts underway to refine the measurement of contribution to take account of the different ways in which funders or businesses operate. Such efforts are a useful extension of the ideas developed within development agencies, and they include ways to account for results not only contributed to directly but also indirectly and through enabling activities (Box 3).

BOX 3: ESTIMATING TOTAL CONTRIBUTION

Socially minded businesses are searching for new ways to measure and report their 'contribution' beyond direct net revenue surplus (profit). The Crown Estate in the UK is using the concept of 'Total Contribution' which covers a range of indicators across economic, environmental and social areas and takes in both the activities of The Crown Estate and its partners across the supply chain. To ensure the most rigorous results they have adopted a conservative practice to quantify and value contribution around three fundamental principles: credit, confidence and net contribution.

Credit: What is claimed is reported as one of three types of contribution

- Direct contribution – activities carried out by Crown Estates
- Indirect contribution – activities commissioned Crown Estates but carried out within the supply chain
- Enabled contribution – activities carried out by other stakeholders that would probably not have happened without the Crown Estates portfolio

Confidence: It is not practical, or even possible in some cases, to capture first hand (primary) data for every indicator. Crown Estates therefore use recognised methodologies, models and academic research to estimate results where necessary. The source of each indicator and the level of confidence of the data is reported. Confidence is split into 3: primary data, e.g. derived from information disclosed by The Crown Estate; estimates based on direct measurement, subject to certain assumptions or models, e.g. statistics from government/industry; assessments based on estimated data subject to certain assumptions or models.

Net contribution: The aim is to capture both positive and negative outcomes from the activities across the portfolio, and to report the resulting net contribution. This is difficult in the early stages but reflects a clear aspiration to create a balanced scorecard of performance.

Source: The Crown Estate 2011/12

In reality, the tension between attribution and contribution is more or less solved by the need to be pragmatic (some level of claiming of results happens in both approaches), as well as the need to acknowledge the efforts of others. At the project level, attribution is made possible by the tightness of the causal chain, while at higher levels of aggregation attribution morphs more into contribution, almost by necessity. What is clear is that results reporting needs a strong organisational framework that starts with programme design and a strong theory of change, prioritises the ability to monitor and evaluate, and offers a fairly simple structure for aggregating and communicating results, whether by sector, country or the agency as a whole. In almost all cases this requires some standardisation of indicators that can be tracked locally but aggregated as required. This approach is useful in creating a snapshot of agency effort, but it rarely covers the entire donor portfolio and has to be matched with more decentralised levels of reporting if it is also to be useful for aid quality and effectiveness purposes. This usually involves a mix of project, programme and country partnership results frameworks which feed directly off one another and create a platform for partnership working and the monitoring and evaluation of agency-wide policy goals and strategy.

Organisational Culture and Incentives

The literature is near-unanimous that a results-focused culture must be predicated on an institution-wide commitment to clearly defined objectives pursued with strategic clarity and supported by dynamic resource allocation.

BOX 4: FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING A RESULTS-FOCUSED CULTURE – THE FORD FOUNDATION

- Create a clear and focused strategic vision.
- Allocate resources on a differentiated and dynamic basis.
- Build accountability based on clearly delineated roles and responsibilities.
- Put a premium on deep and effective listening.
- Implement a results-focused culture across the entire organization.

Realizing these fundamental principles in an organization's culture is no simple undertaking. It requires comfort with uncertainty and risk, and openness to elements of accountability that at times call for significant shifts in perspective. It demands that we continually ask ourselves, at every stage of our work and at all levels of the organization: Are we making as great a difference as we can for the communities and people we are entrusted with serving? Is there anything we can learn—and change—to achieve the maximum results? And how do we define what constitutes results for the range of work and goals to which we are committed?

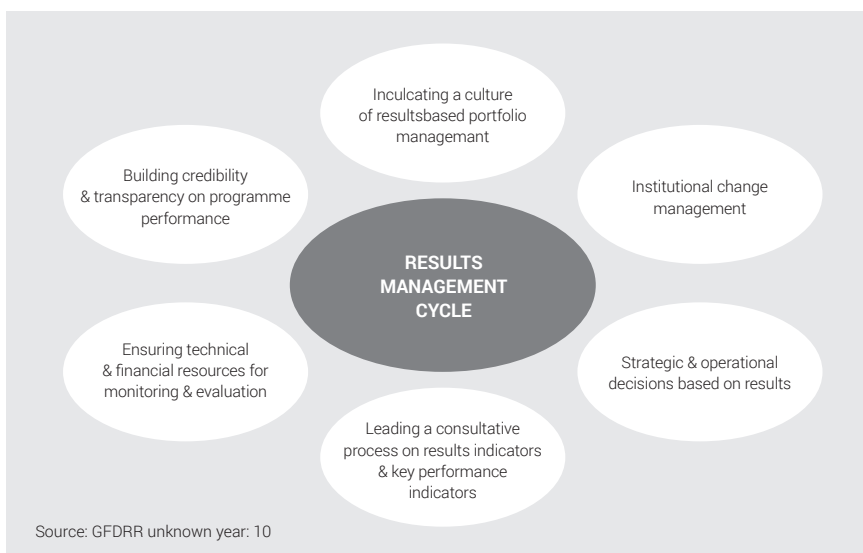
Source: Ubinas 2012

Many of the practical issues affecting the implementation of a coherent results system can be traced back to constraints or blockages within organisational cultures and incentive sets. In a recent 'root and branch' study of results measurement in Norwegian Aid, the study's authors found a system that lacked coherence and failed to produce consistent information and an organisational culture in which concerns around being partner-led and the possible political ramifications of a more overt focus on results held back constructive dialogue about results measurement (Itad/CMI 2014).

A results-focused culture must be predicated on an institution-wide commitment to clearly defined objectives pursued with strategic clarity and supported by dynamic resource allocation.

Efforts to build a results culture vary across the development system. Responses to the DAC online survey make it clear that organisational cultures that support learning and knowledge sharing are a necessary part of achieving and managing for results. Clear and consistent leadership from top senior management is also essential, from setting strategic vision to creating a safe organisational environment in which both positive and negative performance can be openly discussed (Box 4/ Figure 1).

Figure 1: The importance of leadership in the results management cycle



RESULTS IN PRACTICE: THREE AGENCY SNAPSHOTS

THE UK DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID)

Results have received strong reinforcement in the current political climate in the UK. DFID, as the lead agency on ODA, is tasked with scaling up its 'results ambitions' in line with the commitment to reach 0.7% of GDP and in telling a stronger story on results as a way of demonstrating value for money and accountability to the UK public.

There have been several key elements to DFID's latest push on results:

- A major review of the bilateral programme, forming the basis of a series of 'results commitments' that contribute to department-wide objectives.
- A comprehensive review of multilateral aid commitments and a clear agenda for change based around demonstrating stronger global and country-level results connected to UK aid money.
- Building on these two reviews, UK Aid: Changing Lives, Delivery Results sets out eleven measurable 'headline' results that the UK is seeking to achieve in 2012-2015, together with a set of organisational priorities to maximise impact and value for money.
- A department-wide Business Plan plus Regional Operational Plans with actions and results forecasts up to 2015.


- New internal business processes, including more rigorous programme/project design templates, with a 'business case' emphasising the more systematic use of evidence, theory of change, ability to evaluate and more robust quality assurance.
- Standardized results indicators covering DFID's bilateral and multilateral programme.
- A department-wide Results Framework.

The Results Framework follows the four-tier model widely used across the development system (EuropeAid 2013: 2) (Figure 2). As such it responds to the need for clear external accountability by identifying a core subset of results which DFID will seek to influence directly, as well as fulfilling the demands of corporate performance management, with a range of key performance indicators that provide closer to real time data on DFID's operational effectiveness and organisational efficiency. The indicators are aligned with DFID's strategic priorities as set out in its Business Plan.

Figure 2: DFID Results Framework 2014



Results are aggregated using a set of core (standardised) indicators. Those relating to the bilateral programme focus on where DFID is seeking to directly attribute results. Attribution in this sense means linking the proportion of DFID inputs to a programme to its benefits. For example, an education programme may help to retain 30,000 girls in school until grade 5: as DFID has contributed 50 percent of the funding for this programme, it claims that it has directly assisted 15,000 girls to remain in school (see Annex 1 for how this is reported at country level). Because school retention is a key strategic result pursued across the bilateral programme and the indicator is standardised, pro-rated results can be aggregated up to the regional and corporate levels. While a form of attribution, this is not attribution in the strict evaluation sense. As things currently stand, DFID's method for pro-rating development results takes in less than half of current bilateral spending.



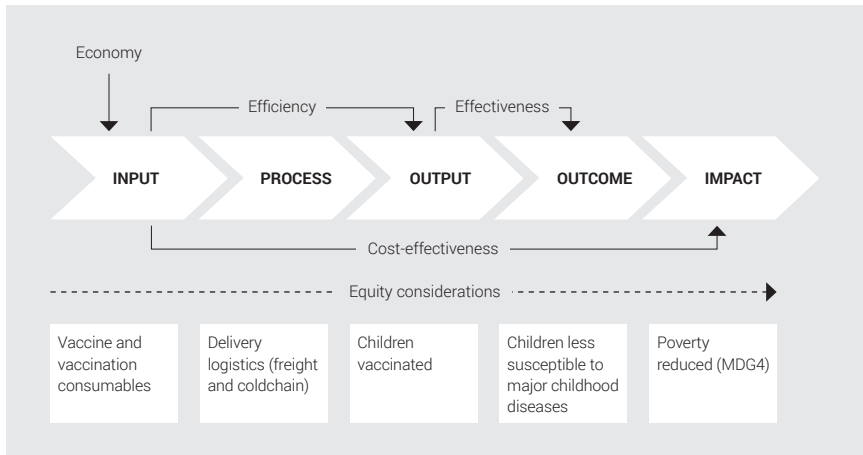
A vital piece in the DFID results architecture is the Business Case. This sets out the rationale for choosing a project, programme or approach to funding and aims to provide a consistent approach to the choices and design of DFID interventions.

Attribution is not attempted in the multilateral programme: instead core indicators refer to the overall results achieved by multilateral partners, rather than the results that can be attributed to DFID as a result of its core funding. These are presented alongside the UK's funding share of the multilateral organisation, in order to show the extent of the UK's contribution.

A vital piece in the DFID results architecture, bringing together what UK aid is trying to achieve with how it is measuring, evaluating and attributing progress, is the Business Case. This sets out the rationale for choosing a project, programme or approach to funding and aims to provide a consistent approach to the choices and design of DFID interventions. At the heart of the Business Case is the Results Chain (Figure 3). This explicitly sets out the results to be achieved by an intervention and is informed by evidence for the country context, the need for the intervention, possible alternative approaches and why it is right for DFID to intervene. The Results Chain is embedded in a Theory of Change which identifies target populations and baseline conditions, evidence about the expected change and key assumptions.

Business Case guidance is clear that a strong TOC, presented in a Results Chain format, makes it easier to monitor the intervention as it proceeds, as well as to evaluate and to attribute results over the full span of DFID engagement.

Figure 3: The DFID Results Chain



Given the breadth and decentralised nature of the bilateral programme, an ongoing challenge involves matching programme and project theories of change with a core set of standardised indicators. The risk is that the two become disconnected, with one fulfilling a programme management function and the other an accountability function, or that the indicators themselves become a sort of pick ‘n’ mix for country programmes and end up being isolated from meaningful interventions. This is addressed, in part, through the detailed guidance provided to programme teams on programme design issues, but it also requires constant vigilance on the part of the programme management and quality assurance functions.

As with most other bilaterals, an added dimension in DFID’s results agenda is the role of partners and suppliers. In DFID, working with partners involves the strong expectation that their programme delivery will directly match the intervention logic developed in the Business Case. Partners/suppliers are therefore required to submit, as part of the tendering process, details of how they expect to deliver on the theory of change along with indicators to measure and monitor results consistent with the expectations set out in the Business Case. The aim is to ensure not only a strong focus on how results will be achieved but also greater consistency and coherence across DFID programming. The obvious challenge here is that partners are less

directly under DFID's control and that many of them are being relied upon to work in remote and difficult environments where delivery is difficult at the best, and data access and reliability are major challenges. DFID is increasingly engaging with its partners/suppliers through conferences and seminars to communicate evolving

DFID guidance on programme design and implementation, as well as to build greater consistency in results-orientation (including when operating in complex environments) amongst its many implementation partners.

Since adopting the Business Case Approach, DFID has conducted regular reviews through a Quality Assurance Unit. Over time a great deal of progress has been made, particularly in building consistency and coherence across DFID 'results providers' (country offices and partners), but an end-to-end review of the programme cycle, commissioned in 2013, also noted some important challenges:

- Evidence of an emerging culture of risk aversion; treating guidance as rules.
- Programmes need to be flexible and responsive to changing political realities and dynamics on the ground.
- Programme management skills are not valued and are in short supply.
- Programme management guidance has mushroomed, becoming too long and difficult to follow.
- The cost of reporting results is significant (close to 2-3 months of an individual's time per country office) and requires the recruitment of additional statistical and results advisors.

As a response, DFID is rolling out a web-based data base to enhance the reporting process. It is also now looking at how programming culture and behaviour can be reshaped ('adaptive programming') to improve performance. In particular, the focus is on achieving quantifiable results while rebalancing the programme cycle to ensure greater adaptability to context, more room for innovation and an ability to focus on longer term change processes (all within a framework of a clear audit trail and value for money).

THE WORLD BANK

The World Bank's results agenda has been a work in progress for many years. Results frameworks have long existed in Bank Group-supported development operations, but more recently there have been intensified efforts to improve these frameworks for better data capture and to reflect the evolving business model of the Bank.

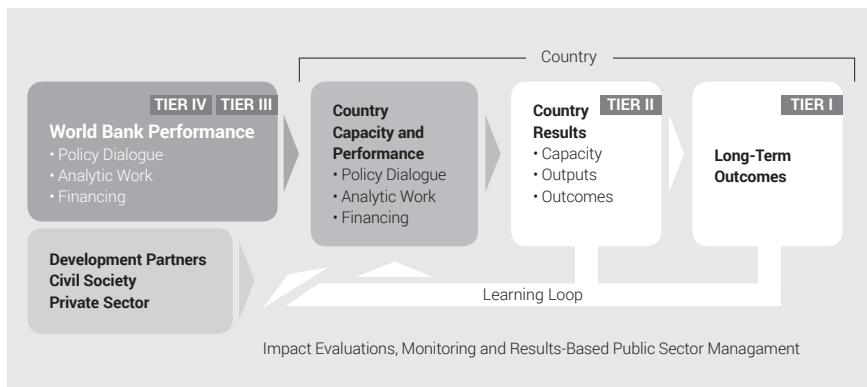
Key features of the current results architecture are:

- A Corporate Scorecard that, as of 2014, aggregates contributions from the whole Bank Group – World Bank, IFC and MIGA according to three tiers:
 - The Goals and Development Context – an overview of progress on key development challenges faced by client countries.
 - Results – reports on key sectoral and multi-sectoral results achieved by WBG clients with the support of WBG operations and in line with WBG strategy.
 - Performance – WBG performance in implementing strategy and operational effectiveness, i.e. whether the Bank is managing the performance of its activities effectively to achieve results.
- Results-based Country Assistance/Country Partnership Strategies (as of July 2014, Country Partnership Frameworks) that take in all Bank Group operations in support of the client country's development programme. The new CPF's place increased emphasis on systematic country diagnostics, evidence-based operations and learning.
- Sector Strategies with measurable results indicators.
- Projects and programmes with results frameworks to guide implementation, measure impact and capture lessons learned.
- Results-based financing, such as Program-for-Results, that supports whole of government expenditure programmes to achieve key sector outcomes (whether service delivery, governance or infrastructure).
- Core sector indicators covering 26+ sectors/themes and project beneficiary information, added to project results frameworks as relevant for upward reporting and aggregation.

- Results-focused knowledge services in which staff report whether knowledge/ analytical work has achieved its objectives or not in Activity Completion Summaries.
- Self and independent evaluations, quality reviews and client feedback.
- IDA also uses a Results Measurement System to identify and track development results in countries where policies and operations are being supported and to evaluate IDA's performance in the process. The system measures results on four levels: IDA countries' progress, IDA-supported development results; IDA operational effectiveness and IDA organisational effectiveness.

The Bank's approach to reporting development results is based on its underlying business model and an analysis of 'contribution', as set out in Figure 4. Based on the needs of client countries, the Bank provides financing for development programs, policy dialogue, and analytic work to support country public expenditure programs and the strengthening of policies and institutions, often in partnership with other development partners, civil society, and the private sector. The Bank supports aspects of country programs to achieve results in line with country demand and priorities and in coordination with other development partners.

Figure 4: The Bank's contribution model



In Figure 4 the stages of results reporting – Tiers I-IV – are in line with the structure of the Corporate Scorecard. As noted above, in 2014 the format was changed to a three-tier structure, but the principle remains the same. The main purpose of the Scorecard is two-fold: to provide accountability for the Bank's shareholders, and to act as a performance management tool.

The dispersed nature of results makes aggregation a challenge. The Core Sector Indicators, revised most recently in July 2013, supplement more detailed project, country and sector results data, thus enabling staff to gather information on a uniform set of indicators at the project level and to improve the ability to aggregate and report on results at the corporate level across the results chain. To facilitate the capture of such data, Bank systems were updated to allow teams to add relevant standardised sector indicators to project results frameworks. Increasingly the Bank is putting in place a 'connectivity infrastructure' that allows its staff to be 'location neutral' in terms of the information and knowledge they can access, the transfer of skills relevant to clients and the capacity of business units to report up and out on results.



The dispersed nature of results makes aggregation a challenge.

While results are the responsibility of all Bank staff, managerially the agenda has moved from sitting with the Results Secretariat in OPCS to a new Director of Results, Openness and Effectiveness. This positions the agenda firmly in the new mould of the Bank, with an integrated focus on results, data transparency and social accountability. It is noteworthy that part of the responsibility of this Directorate is to increase beneficiary engagement in Bank operations, with a commitment that beneficiary feedback will become a standard feature of all operations in the coming years.

Taken in its entirety, the Bank's results architecture is large and multifaceted. Ongoing challenges include disaggregating data by gender and for fragile and conflict-affected states. Work is continually underway to focus metrics more on outcomes rather than outputs, but there are implications for staff performance tools and incentives which need to be taken fully into account. Particularly difficult areas for results measurement continue to be the Bank's convening and knowledge services. No one metric will suffice and, by definition, many of the activities feed into qualitative processes that will not yield clear outcomes for a long time. This highlights the challenge in identifying the Bank's specific contribution.

The forward agenda includes greater investment in and reliance on geo-coded data, as well as a revised approach to risk that is intended to provide greater support to innovation and adaptation while ensuring due attention to the Bank's fiduciary and anti-corruption procedures.



Taken in its entirety, the Bank's results architecture is large and multifaceted.


THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

The Rockefeller Foundation is a world leading foundation. It structures its work around multi-dimensional, cross-sectoral initiatives that seek innovative solutions and support enabling environments to bring about change. Results are at the heart of the Foundation's work, as is evaluation. Part of its approach to results has been forged in its relationship with stakeholders and grantees, very much in the spirit of mutual learning and accountability. The Foundation has developed an approach to planning, monitoring and evaluating its work that takes this into account, including major investments in new technology – interactive web-based approaches, crowd-sourced and mobile-technology platforms – to shorten feedback loops, open up the results dialogue to a wider range of stakeholders, and provide real time information to programme managers. Key elements of the approach are:

Shared Outcomes. The Foundation's modus operandi is to work with other actors. Increasingly the Foundation brings together grantees and partners from developed and developing countries to establish a common vision of the problem, outcomes and indicators for success. Grantee agreements include reference to the common vision of results and shared outcomes to which the grantee contributes, and foundation teams are expected to manage portfolios of grants and relationships with grantees towards that common vision. According to the Foundation, 'This shared-outcomes approach forms the basis for ongoing monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and for learning dialogues with grantees and partners' (Rodin and MacPherson 2012: 13).

Shared Results Framework. Figure 5 shows the framework around which foundation staff, grantees and partners develop a common vision of the results and impacts they are seeking to achieve collectively. As a tool it effectively combines the efforts of others with those of the foundation, while providing an anchor for ongoing

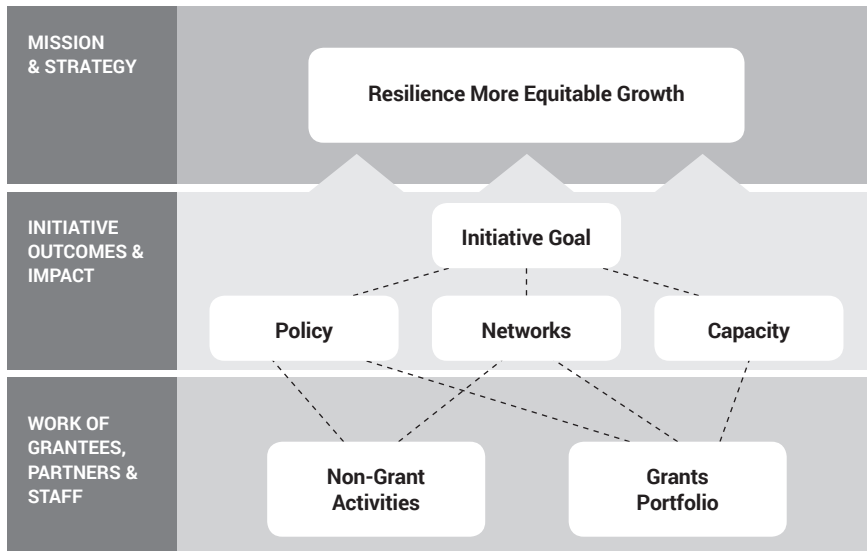
dialogue with grantees and partners about progress towards and their contribution to shared outcomes. Unlike the results frameworks of some bilateral donors, it builds actively on a partnership approach to implementation and results achievement (in the same way as some of the country results frameworks being developed in the post-Busan period). But as in the case of other donors it serves as a framework for managing portfolios of grants and monitoring change based on a shared vision of the theory of change and, where appropriate, core indicators as the basis for adding up results beyond individual programmes.



The Rockefeller Foundation awards grants to M&E groups and specialists in both developed and developing countries who act as monitoring partners or ‘critical friends’ throughout the life of the initiative.

Monitoring Partners (critical friends). Most organisations have capacity limitations on the amount of time that can be devoted to monitoring and learning. This is often particularly the case when working with fairly stretched partner organisations in remote or difficult geographies. To try to overcome this problem, the Rockefeller Foundation awards grants to M&E groups and specialists in both developed and developing countries who act as monitoring partners or ‘critical friends’ throughout the life of the initiative. These monitoring partners work with grantees to help set up monitoring systems and provide support in analysing data, ask the tough evaluative questions and support grantees in seeking and using feedback to improve programme outcomes. Periodic evaluations are conducted by independent teams to provide an objective assessment of progress towards outcomes and impact.

Figure 5: The Rockefeller Foundation ‘Shared Results Framework’
Shared Results Framework



BOX 5: GLOBAL GIVING: THE POWER OF STORIES AND FEEDBACK LOOPS

Social challenges are complex. At Global Giving they are seeking to contribute to social change by developing better feedback loops. With initial funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Storytelling Project is an experiment in collecting community feedback. They have started by recording thousands of stories told by people from areas where Global Giving partners work. In 2010 and 2011, teams of over 1,000 local Kenyan and Ugandan scribes have collected 57,220 stories from over 5,000 community members by asking a simple question: ‘Tell us about a time when a person or an organization tried to change something in your community.’ These stories have covered a wide range of topics, problems, and solutions. So far, the community members have named more than 1,000 organizations related to something happening in their local communities.

GlobalGiving are also building and testing tools to turn these stories into data and finding ways to complete feedback loops between communities in need and the organizations that serve them. Every storyteller shares two stories about two different community efforts, so that the teams can detect and correct self-reporting bias. By keeping the story-prompting question broad and open-ended, it is possible to identify community-focused organizations and potential innovators beyond our network. The openness of the question helps to build benchmarks from community sentiment and provide baseline data for future interventions not yet conceived.

Source: GlobalGiving 2014

CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Managing for development results remains a crucially important agenda for the development community. But as already noted, it is not really one agenda at all. One of the main challenges facing development actors is how they position themselves amidst the multiple sub-agendas that emphasise results and results achievement in development.

A consistent finding across almost all results studies is that organisational procedures and systems for achieving results need to be seen as dynamic, not static.

Much of the tension around the different results agendas centres on whether results are principally for management or reporting purposes, attributed (pro-rated) or not to an agency's funding. While not trade-offs as such, the problem of attribution continues. Meanwhile agencies are increasingly focused on ways of assessing the contribution that they make to development results along with partner governments, civil-society actors and entities operating outside the aid nexus.

A consistent finding across almost all results studies is that organisational procedures and systems for achieving results need to be seen as dynamic, not static. 'In other words, there is no single solution, but rather systems that need to be introduced, used, tested, reviewed and then updated in a rolling cycle' (Itad/CMI 2014). While common definitions, core indicators, guidance and training are all vital elements of a comprehensive results system, there needs to be an element of ongoing learning, review and adaptation if such systems are to continue to perform

well. A results-focused culture must integrate course-correction methods, acknowledging successes and failures and adjusting resources accordingly. Results approaches that lock agencies into rigid procedures and processes tend to come unstuck.

Technical quality and the ability to evaluate are vitally important elements of any results system. The prospects of monitoring and evaluating for results is significantly enhanced by a holistic view of the programming cycle and the effective use of theories of change. This applies equally to partners as it does to agencies themselves. Partner-led approaches need to be underpinned with a clear theory of change and a clear vision of shared outcomes (and related indicators) that supports consistent reporting and effective evaluation. Investing in data generation and capture, whether directly through programmes or through investment in 'monitoring partners', is a vital accompaniment to better results. Use of new technology from interactive web platforms to multi-media tools has the potential to shorten feedback loops between beneficiaries, partners and funders.

While high technical standards and systems are a necessary constituent of effective evaluation and development results, what makes these systems and procedures effective is the organisational culture (Itad/CMI 2014). Agencies need to invest in quality assurance while balancing its role with the need to avoid excessive compliance requirements, encourage appropriate risk-taking and build a collective sense of responsibility for results. Organisations with structures and systems that ensure learning and knowledge sharing, supported by a performance management system that acknowledges these competencies, are likely to be the most incentive-compatible with the results agenda.



Ultimately there is no panacea for results management in complex social contexts.

Wanted: a simple measure of success in a complex world! (Ramalingam 2013)

A meaningful results agenda in today's world needs to take account of the diversity of development programmes and the need for a more experimental approach in the face of complex problems. This suggests, as the recent internal review in DFID found, that there is a need to differentiate the approach to programme management

'not as a way of squeezing greater efficiency out of service providers, but to enable development agency and partner staff to innovate, experiment, test and adapt' (Barder and Ramalingam 2012).

The challenge is to ensure that the focus on results supports rather than inhibits effective feedback loops and allows for greater adaptation of how results are achieved. At one extreme this means an end to the tools of ex ante top-down planning and budgeting that donors use in favour of payment by results, thus freeing up developing countries to experiment, learn and adapt, supported by third-party results verification.

Less extreme is the idea that, at a minimum, results should lead to a simplification of organisational procedures and incentive structures to support adaptation and learning along the results delivery chain within a clear framework of accountability and value for money. In conditions where delivery is locally led and partner-led, good practice points to the importance of a shared theory of change, clear (and short) feedback loops and adequate room to make mid-course corrections so as to achieve programme results. Moves for open and increasingly geo-coded data increase the likelihood of robust results information becoming available on a geographically diverse basis and, increasingly, in real time.

Ultimately there is no panacea for results management in complex social contexts. The ability to manage for results effectively depends on the ability of an organisation to be flexible and to engage with local contexts while working closely with partners around a shared sense of how a programme is meant to work, how it is working in practice and what needs to change. For reporting and accountability purposes it is vital that there is a mechanism for adding up results that closely reflects the organisation's business model. As the recent study of Norwegian Aid concluded, RBM is a management strategy rather than a set of technical tools: 'For RBM to be successful, organisations need to develop and nurture a culture of results where enquiry, evidence and learning are valued as essential to good management' (Itad/CMI 2014). Or, as Judith Rodin, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, has said, in the context of leading organisational change: 'culture eats strategy for lunch. A leader must recognize that change is as much about influencing the culture as it is about influencing the domains of work' (Forbes Magazine 2012).

- 1 The paper focuses almost entirely on how agencies are taking forward the results agenda. The role of partner governments is touched on, but is not the main focus of the paper.
- 2 See Box 1 for further detail of theories of change.

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'Multi-stakeholder Initiatives: Human Rights and Global Public Goods',
public seminar, DIIS, 20.11.14

'Aid for Private Sector Development in Africa: What Works and What Can Be Achieved?', public seminar, DIIS, 2.12.14

'Anti-gay Laws in Africa; Rights and Challenges', public seminar, DIIS, 12.12.14

'Udviklingspolitiske Tendenser', final seminar, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17.12.14

'New Approaches to Foreign Aid in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Regions',
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