

## The Paris Declaration: Five reasons why it is working

by Brenda Killen\*

*In 2005, almost all DAC donor countries and over 60 developing countries endorsed the Paris Declaration, a comprehensive attempt to change the way donor and developing countries do business together. The declaration was based on five principles: alignment, ownership, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability. This article looks at each of these principles in turn and explores how they are being applied for the better by donors and partner countries alike. It takes examples from across the globe – from the Pacific to Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America – to show that the Paris Declaration has significantly changed attitudes to development co-operation and relationships between donor and partner country. This has been achieved through generating fairer and more inclusive global development partnerships, introducing a monitoring system to track progress in achieving commitments and establishing the foundations for greater accountability.*

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When the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was adopted in 2005, ministers from donor and developing countries agreed to undertake some landmark reforms in the way they work together. In that year, the *Development Co-operation Report* listed three good reasons why the Paris Declaration would make a difference. Now that we have passed the 2010 “due date” of the Paris Declaration commitments, this article takes a look at what has been achieved and highlights not three, but *five* important ways in which it has already made a difference.

## What did the Paris Declaration aim to achieve?

The years leading up to the Paris Declaration were marked by attempts by the world’s donor organisations and countries to ensure that the aid they were giving was having the greatest impact possible in developing nations. This was based on the recognition that achieving the full set of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in a sustainable way would require not only an increase in financial resources for development, but also a new approach to development and major improvements in the quality of aid. The broad consensus that emerged on what needed to be done to produce better results was unprecedented. In 2005, almost all DAC donors and over 60 developing countries endorsed the Paris Declaration, a comprehensive attempt to change the way donor and developing countries do business together based on five principles:

1. **Alignment:** Donors base their overall support on partner countries’ national development strategies, institutions and procedures
2. **Ownership:** Partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies and co-ordinate development actions.
3. **Harmonisation:** Donors’ actions are more harmonised, transparent and collectively effective.
4. **Managing for results:** Donors and partners manage resources and improve decision-making to ensure measureable results.
5. **Mutual accountability:** Donors and partners are accountable for development results.

### Box 1. Monitoring progress against the Paris Declaration

The Paris Declaration was designed as an agreement against which progress can be tracked. When adopting commitments for both developing countries and donors, it was agreed that progress towards these commitments would be monitored against a set of 12 indicators and targets to be achieved by 2010. This was the first time in the history of international development co-operation that donors and recipients had agreed to measure their success – or failure – at making aid more effective.

This built-in monitoring system, managed by the DAC Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, means that the Paris Declaration provides a tool for evidence-based dialogue to improve aid practices and empowers developing countries to push through aid management reforms. The Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (WP-EFF for short) is an international partnership of policy makers and aid practitioners from donor and developing countries hosted by the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee. It is the principal forum through which policy makers and aid practitioners deal with aid effectiveness issues. The Working Party has organised three High Level Fora on Aid Effectiveness, in Rome (2003), Paris (2005) and Accra (2008). These have raised awareness about aid effectiveness and built consensus on the actions needed to maximise aid to achieve lasting development.

### Box 1. Monitoring progress against the Paris Declaration *(continued)*

The WP-EFF also organises the Paris Declaration Monitoring Surveys. Results are published at the international level – but, crucially, they are also discussed in-country with donors, government, civil society and others. This is an extremely powerful way of holding everyone to account. And they have clearly targeted an important need – participation in the survey (which is voluntary, and has significant implications for developing countries in terms of personnel time required) has risen steadily:

- 2006 survey: 34 partner countries and 55 donors participated. Provided the baseline for measuring future progress.
- 2008 survey: 55 partner countries participated. The survey provided evidence for the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Accra (2008). In addition, the 2008 survey provided a baseline for countries that did not take part in the first round.
- 2011 survey: The third and last round of monitoring will tell us whether the targets agreed in 2005 have been met. Over 80 countries have confirmed their participation.

The results of the 2006 and 2008 surveys and details of the 2011 survey are available at [www.oecd.org/dac/pdsurvey](http://www.oecd.org/dac/pdsurvey). For further description of the range of issues covered by the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, visit [www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness](http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness).

Signatory countries committed themselves to achieving targets on aid delivery by 2010 (Box 1). In 2008, the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Accra led to the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), which focuses on the main technical, institutional, and political challenges to implementing the Paris principles.

This article goes through each of the Paris Declaration principles in turn and explores how they are being applied for the better by donors and partner countries alike. It takes examples from across the globe – from the Pacific to Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America – to show that the Paris Declaration has changed attitudes to development co-operation and relationships between donor and partner country for the better.

### ***Alignment***

Decades of development experience have shown that when donors pursue their own projects and programmes and bypass the administrative systems, policies and priorities of the partner country in which they are involved, the sustainability of their efforts is undermined, as well as the ability of the countries receiving aid to manage their own future. To rectify this, the alignment principle of the Paris Declaration and AAA makes countries' own priorities central. This means that donors must align their support to countries' development strategies and must also allocate their aid through countries' own financial systems – in this way parliaments, civil society organisations, the media and the electorate can know what is being planned and what may be spent, and can exercise their roles in the checks and balances that make governance work for development.

Ghana provides a good example of how country leadership can lead to change (Box 2). Ghana effectively achieved this goal by using a legitimate network, in this case the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, to broker change by providing both technical inputs and political leverage. As a result, the government of Ghana, backed by the results from the survey on monitoring the Paris Declaration, took an important step in facing up to its development partners and asserting its right to have foreign financing directed through its country systems. The use of country systems is now a core element of Ghana's aid policy (2010). Ghana

has shown how important it is for recipient countries to take the lead in this process in order to ensure alignment with their country-specific needs.

Another aspect of alignment is predictability in financial arrangements. Many partner countries do not have a full overview of the likely aid transfers over the short to medium term (*i.e.* one to three years ahead). This impedes their ability to plan. Donors have so far been reluctant to share this information in case it is perceived as a firm commitment. Partner countries have nonetheless underlined the importance of having even approximate scenarios of likely funding levels to aid their own budget planning and preparation processes.

The Paris Declaration and the AAA have provided a framework around which donors are making progress: increasing numbers of donors are putting in place a system that can allow them to increase predictability (planning budgetary resources for ODA for at least three years). A second step is for donors to communicate these specific multi-year allocations to their partners. There are examples of processes at country level that aim at providing more timely planning information on a regular basis – this is good news. The DAC has also recently taken a concrete step to share, on a test case basis, the information collected through the DAC survey on donors' forward spending plans (OECD, 2009d). Sharing this type of information more systematically could be a cost-effective way of supporting the AAA commitments on transparency and predictability, as it provides a starting point for a broader dialogue on “rolling” indications at country level.

### Box 2. Managing foreign financing: Ghana's experience

In Ghana, aid accounts for close to 20% of the government's total annual resources. Managing foreign financing effectively is a key challenge for the Ghanaian government; in 2008 the Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration identified the need for greater use of country systems (OECD, 2008). It found that although Ghana had improved its public financial management systems, this had not been matched by an increase in their use by donors.

This finding encouraged the government of Ghana to face up to its development partners and assert its right to have foreign financing directed through its country systems. To back up their implementation of this important commitment, the Ghanaian government asked the WP-EFF – as an international body with representation from both the donor and partner country communities – to provide both technical and political backing to this endeavour. The WP-EFF provided support under its Focus Country approach.

The WP-EFF's Global Partnership on Country Systems facilitated dialogue between the government of Ghana, civil society organisations, and donor countries. All parties agreed on practical steps to ensure the increased use of Ghana's country systems so that the government could better plan its resources, receive more accurate information on its predicted aid flows, and better account for the use of all of its resources to parliament. The government of Ghana has taken the lead in ensuring that donors co-ordinate their support to Ghana's Audit Service to facilitate increased use of Ghanaian (and not donors') auditing systems. This will ensure that audits will be tailored to Ghana's citizens, and not only to donors. Ghana is also providing training to development partners in its national budget practices and procedures, so that they will be better able to assess their strength and use them where possible. Furthermore, development partners and the government have identified ways of improving the quality and reliability of donors' projections in the budget. This includes joint financial forecasting as well as the integration of donor data and information into the budget process.

For further information see OECD (undated), *Country Systems Initiatives: A Concept Note For Ghana*, OECD, Paris, available at [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/22/34/45390654.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/22/34/45390654.pdf).

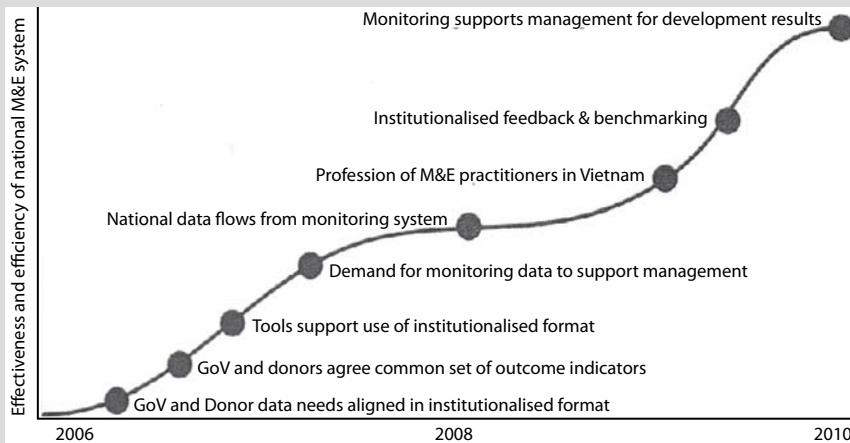
## Ownership

Experience has shown that when partner countries are not placed in the drivers' seat and allowed to determine their own development path and policies, the effectiveness of aid and ultimately development results will not be sustainable. Vietnam has some lessons to share on this approach (Box 3).

### Box 3. How Vietnam asked donors to align to government priorities

Since 2004, the government of Vietnam and major donors\* have worked in partnership to develop and test a monitoring format to improve aid effectiveness by providing monitoring data that supports management for development results. The partnership directly addresses the transaction costs identified by the project management units, which had been required to present progress reports in different formats to a variety of donors and government agencies. With support from AusAID, the Ministry of Planning and Investment has led this initiative with five other ministries and seven provinces. The result is an aligned format, software and capacity building programme for monitoring development results against outcomes that have been determined jointly by government and donors. The following figure charts the evolution of the monitoring format that resulted from this partnership.

#### The National Monitoring System roadmap



Note: "M&E" stands for "monitoring and evaluation".

Source: ADB (Asian Development Bank) (2009), *From Concept to Action: Asian Experiences on Managing for Development Results*, Asia-Pacific Community of Practice on Managing for Development Results ADB, Manila, p. 28.

\*The World Bank, JBIC, ADB, KfW of Germany and AfD of France, together accounting for about 80% of Vietnam's ODA.

## Harmonisation

Partner countries differ greatly in their potential for development and in the challenges they face, but at least in one respect, many share a common problem: too little aid from too many donors. This is often referred to as fragmentation of aid (OECD, 2009a). When aid comes from many sources and is spread over too many co-operation programmes, it creates high transactions costs for both donors and recipients. Fragmented, sometimes competing donor practices, especially where there are many small donors and no large donors acting as leads or "anchors"

for others, erode the administrative capacity of recipient partner governments (Knack and Rahman, 2007). The costs of poorly harmonised aid are well known and well documented. For example, an assessment of district health workers in Morogoro, Tanzania in 2004 found they spent 25 days every three months writing reports for donors rather than delivering health care (WHO, 2007). The 2008 Monitoring Survey of the Paris Declaration found that in Vietnam alone, there were 752 visits by donors in 2007 – more than three missions per working day. Of these missions, less than one in five was co-ordinated with another donor (OECD, 2008).

In the midst of a global economic crisis which is having an impact on aid flows, it is crucial, now more than ever, to ensure that each dollar of development assistance has the greatest development impact. Country-led division of labour has emerged as one important strategy to achieve the Paris Declaration principle of harmonisation and to avoid this fragmentation. Division of labour refers to streamlining and co-ordinating donors' assistance, for example by reducing the number of active donors in each sector, area or topic, or reducing the number of sectors, areas or topics focused on by any one donor in a partner country (OECD, 2009c). *Country-led* division of labour means that “The division of labour process should be led by the partner country in dialogue with donors, and in a transparent manner that enables parliaments to fulfil their mandate and enables the participation of civil society and the private sector” (OECD, 2005).

The European Union has been leading this agenda through the EU Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour (EU CoC DoL, May 2007). For example, substantial progress is being made to enhance co-ordination among donors at country level through arrangements such as delegated co-operation (where one donor spends on behalf of another) and co-financing (where several donors provide funding jointly). As of September 2010, there were 73 delegation agreements (from the Commission to a Member State) under preparation or signed for a total of EUR 333.3 million. In parallel, 24 transfer agreements (from a Member State to the Commission) for a total of EUR 111.6 million were in the pipeline or signed. EU Member States have been monitoring progress on division of labour in some 30 partner countries through the EU Fast Track Initiative on Division of Labour (see Box 7 for a Mozambique example).

In addition to the initiatives led by the EU, there are other encouraging examples of harmonisation in development assistance (Boxes 4 and 5).

#### Box 4. Progress towards alignment and harmonisation in Latin America

Paris Declaration principles are being adhered to increasingly in Latin America, as these examples illustrate.

In **Colombia** in 2007, some donors jointly created a Program to Promote Peaceful Coexistence. They created a basket fund administered by UNDP and managed by a committee with representatives of donors and Colombian institutions. The fund finances various activities, from promoting rights of victims of armed violence to rebuilding the social fabric. To assure harmonisation, all donors working in this sector, even those who are not providing funds to this basket, participate in the decision process. This would have been unimaginable before the Paris Declaration. This process is also helping some Colombian official institutions to work together. Some victims' organisations, who are reluctant to work with the government, have agreed to participate with official institutions in activities financed by this fund.

Further information is available on the website of the Program to Promote Peaceful Coexistence (in Spanish), [www.programapromociondelaconvivencia.org](http://www.programapromociondelaconvivencia.org).

**Box 4. Progress towards alignment and harmonisation in Latin America** *(continued)*

**El Salvador** endorsed the Paris Declaration in 2009. In June 2010, after a broad process of negotiation, the Commitments for a National Agenda for Aid Effectiveness were approved and endorsed by the Salvadorian government, donors and civil society organisations. This document establishes the main obligations for all the stakeholders in implementing the Paris Declaration and AAA principles. This is a clear signal of behaviour change by the government, representing its intention to increase aid effectiveness and to include civil society in the process.

*Source: Compromisos para una Agenda Nacional de Eficacia de la Ayuda (Commitments for a National Agenda for Aid Effectiveness), Statement made in San Salvador, 18 June 2010, available at [http://isd.org.sv/inicio/documents/Compromisos\\_para\\_una\\_Agenda\\_Nacional\\_de\\_Eficacia\\_de\\_la\\_Ayuda.pdf](http://isd.org.sv/inicio/documents/Compromisos_para_una_Agenda_Nacional_de_Eficacia_de_la_Ayuda.pdf).*

Seeking more effective co-operation management, **Guatemala** has been inspired by the Paris Declaration principles to establish the International Co-operation Management System. This system allows the government to exercise effective authority over development co-operation flows in and out of the country and to co-ordinate its actions on the basis of its own development policy and strategy. Following its Paris Declaration commitments, Guatemala held a High Level Meeting in 2008 that resulted in the Antigua Declarations I and II. These highlighted the importance of the principle of aligning processes, working together with donors and partners through harmonisation, and the definition of development priorities framed by public policy, programmes and projects of national interest.

*Source: SEGEPLAN(2010), Cooperación Internacional, SEGEPLAN website: [www.segeplan.gob.gt](http://www.segeplan.gob.gt), accessed 18 October 2010.*

**Box 5. Harmonisation in the Pacific: The Cairns Compact**

The Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific is an initiative which was agreed by Pacific leaders at the 2009 Pacific Islands Forum.\* The compact sets out actions to improve the co-ordination and use of development resources in the Pacific, in line with international best practice as expressed in the Paris Declaration. The Cairns Compact establishes new review and reporting processes involving forum countries, development partners and the Forum Secretariat, and sets out principles to guide these processes. Key features of the compact include:

- peer reviews of forum island countries' national development plans
- country reporting on national development plans
- development partner reporting on co-ordination and aid effectiveness
- reporting on progress towards the MDGs
- a high level dialogue with the private sector
- a road map to strengthen public financial management systems
- improving forum island countries' development data

These activities will help to promote best practice in development in the region, and to better direct all available resources – from national budgets and from partners – towards agreed national priorities.

For more information visit [www.aid.gov.au/country/pacific/cairnscompact.cfm](http://www.aid.gov.au/country/pacific/cairnscompact.cfm).

\*The forum members are Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

### *Managing for results*

Managing for results (now known as managing for development results – MfDR) calls for an emphasis on impacts in all aspects of the development process. As such, it embodies generally accepted tenets of good government: clear objectives, evidence-based decision making, transparency and continuous improvement. This approach has major implications for national leaders, public sector officials, donors and citizens. In the current context, MfDR also addresses a range of policy issues, including international goals and standards, country ownership, harmonisation and alignment of donor efforts, accountability for development results, and the participation of civil society (OECD, 2009b). Thanks to the Paris Declaration, demand for MfDR is increasing among developing countries and there are many good examples of country-led MfDR approaches.

For example, the Asian Community of Practice on MfDR has recently compiled experiences in Asia and the Pacific (Box 6) which include lessons from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Many of these directly refer to the influence of the Paris Declaration on their new reforms.

#### **Box 6. From concept to action: managing for development results in Asia**

The government of **Sri Lanka**, as a signatory to the Paris Declaration, is committed to institutionalising managing for development results (MfDR) across the government. A results focus is being built into the national development plan, sectoral plans, ministries and projects. The Ministry of Plan Implementation has introduced MfDR with performance indicators to track the development results of the line ministries and their programmes. Logical framework analysis and results frameworks are being increasingly used in planning and monitoring and evaluation arrangements within government.

In the **Philippines**, a renewed focus on managing for results brought about by the Paris Declaration is creating a strong government focus on demanding results. Public accountability for ODA has raised public awareness, broadened participation, and reduced inefficiencies and spending on the “wrong” things. For example:

- While some bilateral ODA grants remain tied, lack transparency or require their own systems and procedures to be followed, this situation is expected to improve given the mounting pressure on the donor community for country ownership, alignment and harmonisation.
- It is now easier to draw support from the donor community as the country’s development and investment plans are no longer mere wish lists, but a clear articulation of what government sets out to achieve over the medium term. ODA has become less donor or supplier-driven and more aligned to the country’s priorities.
- With government procurement and financial management systems now attuned to international standards and practices, the major ODA sources have begun to adopt these systems rather than imposing theirs (although donors have likewise begun to harmonise and simplify their procedures, one of the key commitments embodied in the Paris Declaration).

*Source:* Asia-Pacific Community of Practice on Managing for Development Results (2009), *Moving from Concept to Action: Asian Experiences on Managing for Development Results*, Asian Development Bank, Manila, available at [www.adb.org/documents/produced-under-ta/39322/39322-01-REG-DPTA/39322-01-REG-DPTA.pdf](http://www.adb.org/documents/produced-under-ta/39322/39322-01-REG-DPTA/39322-01-REG-DPTA.pdf).



## *Mutual accountability*

In the past, aid relations were characterised by a “principal-agent” model of accountability, with donors (principals) seeking to improve the policies and spending behaviour of recipient governments (agents) by attaching conditions at either the project, programme or policy levels to the delivery of aid. This form of accountability, reflecting a power imbalance in the aid relationship, involved a fairly unilateral approach to monitoring the “contractual obligations” of recipient countries as a precondition for the delivery of aid. Mutual accountability is a compact that aims to create a more balanced partnership between donors and recipient governments by binding members together through shared values and commitments in a voluntary process (Steer and Wathne, 2009). There are many examples of how this is being applied in practice, with Mozambique being one of the most well-known (Box 7).

### **Box 7. Mutual accountability in Mozambique**

The Mozambican mutual accountability framework is structured mainly around a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the government of Mozambique and 13 bilateral donors, the European Commission and World Bank (together known as Programme Aid Partners or PAPs). A donor “performance assessment framework”, spelled out in the MOU, allows government to assess donor performance. This annual multi-donor framework scores donors against their progress towards the Paris Declaration and is used to produce a ranking of donor performance. In the past, this assessment was carried out by independent consultants funded by donors. Under the new MOU, government will lead the assessment, building on the independent consultant’s report.

Donors also scrutinise government performance through an assessment framework which is based on the country’s monitoring and evaluation framework for its poverty reduction plan and includes monitoring of progress on development results. Aid performance monitoring efforts are further enhanced by two other initiatives:

1. OZAMOD (the Official Development Assistance to Mozambique Database) – which provides vital information on donor financing
2. The Development Observatory (DO) – a forum for monitoring the objectives, targets and action that have been specifically assigned to the public and private sector within the context of the Mozambican Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. The DO represents civil society’s views on government policy and actions. It is composed of representatives of the government, the donor community and Mozambican civil society.

Mozambique is one of a few countries that has developed an institutional framework for participatory poverty monitoring at the national, provincial and local levels. However, efforts to support better transparency and domestic accountability need to be further strengthened.

#### **Extract from the 2009 Mozambique performance assessment of mutual accountability**

Rank Size	Very good	Medium high	Medium	Medium low	Weak	Total
<b>Very large</b>	CE UK		Germany World Bank			4
<b>Large</b>	Sweden Netherlands	Canada	Denmark Norway	African Development Bank	Portugal	7
<b>Medium</b>	Spain	Ireland	Finland France			4
<b>Small</b>	Switzerland Austria	Italy	Belgium			4
<b>Total</b>	7	3	7	1	1	19

Source: PAP (Programme Aid Partnership) (2010), *PAP Structure*, PAP, Mozambique, available at [www.pap.org.mz/pap\\_structure.htm](http://www.pap.org.mz/pap_structure.htm).

## Where next for aid effectiveness?

The Paris Declaration has changed the development landscape for the better – and the AAA has brought more development actors into the international effort to make development work. The OECD/DAC-hosted discussions of aid effectiveness now bring together representatives from donors (bilateral and multilateral), middle-income countries, low-income countries, civil society organisations, parliaments and local governments – a very inclusive international discussion of development policy. All these actors are beginning to share a common awareness of the need to improve development effectiveness. For example:

- Providers of South-South Co-operation are discussing how to maximise the impact of their development efforts (in the WP-EFF supported Bogota statement).
- The g7+ group of countries affected by conflict and fragility are taking ownership of their development priorities and have agreed the Dili Declaration for Effective Engagement in Fragile States (Dili Declaration, 2010).
- International civil society organisations are considering how to ensure their effectiveness as development actors following AAA recommendations. They have developed the Istanbul Development Effectiveness Principles to guide them (Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, 2010).

At Busan, Korea, from 29 November to 1 December 2011, governments, agencies, organisations and individuals will come together to discuss what we have learned from the Paris Declaration and what more is needed to make aid – and development – effective. The 2011 Paris Declaration Monitoring Survey and the Paris Declaration Evaluation will provide up-to-date information on how aid is being provided, and how this is affecting development. The progress that will be reported, and the agreements that will be reached on aid quality and effective development, will all be built on the commitments reached in 2005 in Paris – commitments that have proven they *have* made a difference and which will resonate well beyond the 2010 due date of the Paris Declaration.

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