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Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration: Case Study of France

Synthesis Report

In accordance with the principle of impartiality, the evaluation has been carried out by consultants who were not required to work on the projects evaluated.

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**Evaluation of the implementation of the Paris Declaration
by France**
Final report

Summary

Scope, subject and limitations of the evaluation

Scope of the evaluation

On 2 March 2005, the main donors and beneficiaries of public development aid (PDA) signed the Paris Declaration (PD) in which they pledged, with the goal of improving the effectiveness of the PDA, to comply with five basic principles: ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability.

The hypothesis according to which the implementation of these principles actually leads to an improvement in the effectiveness of aid has yet to be borne out. This is why the signatories have set up a monitoring and evaluating system characterised by:

- Monitoring of the effective implementation of these principles by donors and beneficiary countries by drawing on a grid of 12 indicators and the monitoring of changes in these indicators at the level of 22 donors and 34 benefi-

ciary countries that have volunteered to take part in this trial carried out under the aegis of the OECD.

- An evaluation carried out in two stages: a) simultaneous evaluations have been launched at the level of 10 donors and 10 beneficiary countries and b) the effect of the application of the principles of the Paris Declaration on the effectiveness of aid will subsequently be investigated.

The lessons of the first evaluation phase will contribute to the drafting of an initial report in preparation for the 3rd High Level Forum on the Paris Declaration (Accra, second half of 2008). The report will be presented first of all to the co-operation and cultural action unit (SCAC) and the French Development Agency (FDA) in January 2008 and at an international meeting in Johannesburg on 31 January and 1 February 2008.

Purpose of the evaluation

The evaluation gauges to what extent France has achieved progress with respect to the commitments it has made. It seeks to explain these findings by analysing the political impetus that has been given, the degree to which human and institutional resources have adapted in the desired direction and the system of incentives likely to motivate players to buy into this approach.

Limits

The PD was involved in changing the approach adopted by the PDA in a very dynamic manner even before it was signed. The inability to take a step back and the difficulties surrounding ownership pose two major obstacles for the evaluator. In this case, the only solution will be to circumvent them, first by analysing the process of change rather than its effects and, secondly, by giving up the idea of establishing causality links.

Overall assessment

Patchy improvement with respect to the principles of the Paris Declaration

The baseline surveys conducted by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) enabled France's initial level to be established in 2006 with respect to the PD indicators. These surveys will be repeated in 2008 and will make it possible to determine the extent to which progress has been achieved. The following assessment directly refers to the five principles and identifies the changes that can be deemed to be in line with these principles.

Ownership

France has adopted approaches implemented at an international level and refers to tools such as PRSPs (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers) (as a political reference framework) or PEFA (Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability) (as a monitoring instrument used for the management of public finances). France ensures that a growing proportion of its aid is booked in the budget of partner governments and is developing regional strategic support hubs. However, the first generation of Partnership Framework Documents (PFD) (a relatively recent aid planning instrument) was designed without any significant consultation.

Alignment

France continues to provide budgetary aid to a limited, but increasing extent. The French Development Agency (FDA) has always drawn on national procedures for the management of the interventions it funds. In contrast, the Priority Solidarity Fund (PSF) continues to be managed to a large extent according to French procedures. The results can only be predicted to a limited extent: the PFD sets out the planned expenditure over five years, but France is unable to commit itself to these figures, especially due to the fact that budgetary decisions are made on an annual basis.

Harmonisation

France makes a substantial contribution to multilateral funds and to sector-related mutual funds in certain countries. It actively participates in the European Code of Conduct. The PFD imposes a degree of concentration of resources but many interventions are still launched without any concentration. France actively participates in joint initiatives launched by donors in the countries where they are organised.

Managing for results and mutual accountability

These two principles are still barely applied, except in some countries where pressure exerted by peers has enabled interesting experiments to be undertaken. The monitoring indicators that are used remain, however, closer to the concept of output than that of outcomes.

In other words, there have been some changes heading in the direction of the PD principles, but they remain fairly limited. To what extent are these changes due to the deliberate implementation of PD principles? The answer to this question can be found in an analysis of the factors that explain this situation.

Explanatory elements

The staff employed by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and the FDA are largely aware of the existence of the PD, but the precise implications for individual staff members often result from personal interpretations and initiatives. France played a proactive role in the process leading to the drafting of the PD and rapidly applied its concepts to a French action plan that was definitely in line with the PD, but the implementation of this plan is running behind schedule.

The evaluation suggests that three main explanatory elements account for this situation:

- I) The flaws in the analysis of the application scope of the PD, in other words, the characteristics of PDA and the countries in which it operates.
 - II) The lack of political impetus.
 - III) The institutional framework of French aid.
- I) The PD applies to public development aid, but the **notion of PDA** is a heterogeneous concept that encompasses interventions aimed at achieving a wide variety of objectives and implemented in countries with widely diverging characteristics:
- Interventions may be motivated by various kinds of objectives: supporting the public action of a partner country, making a contribution to initiatives aimed at meeting global public challenges, promoting the donor's values, interests or priorities or reacting to humanitarian emergencies.
 - Interventions motivated by these various kinds of objectives are implemented in a wide spectrum of countries that range from emerging economies to states that have been thoroughly destabilised.
 - France operates in countries where it is one of the main donors and where it enjoys huge potential in terms of political influence. In other cases, it plays a far more marginal role.

The question of ascertaining to what extent and in what way the five principles of the PD must be implemented in these different types of situations has not been covered by precise analyses or clear operational instructions.

- II) France has taken part in the process of implementing the PD under the pressure of **five kinds** of incentive, classified as follows in their decreasing order of importance:

- A specific momentum, which appeared before the PD, and which is the most powerful driving force accounting for the aforementioned results.
- A horizontal impetus between signatory donors that is very strong in some countries.
- A vertical 'administrative' impetus, which originates from the managers of the three components of the French PDA system.
- A weak political impetus in France, where the PD is seen to be an administrative type of initiative as its political dimension has not yet been grasped.
- An equally limited political commitment by partner governments.
- be able to make a credible case to defend the need for adjustments to the PD insofar as one draws further away from the ideal conditions for its application.

The diversity of the scope of application also implies that training agents in the field should, to a significant extent, include listening to them and learning from their experience.

Lastly the study draws attention to the importance of the last two principles of the PD (managing for results and mutual accountability): the application of these principles will provide the information that is indispensable for the approach as a whole and, therefore, its credibility in the medium term. The study recommends that France should play a key role to ensure that these two principles, which have been discarded to some extent, recover the important role they deserve.

The PD approach has therefore not been bought into politically in France or partner countries.

- III) The three players in charge of French PDA are involved in a **series of reforms that are increasingly differentiating their fields of activity**, and this leads them to position themselves differently with respect to the PD.

These three explanatory factors are not independent of one another. The weak impetus for implementation might result from conceptual, but also political, difficulties arising from the application of the PD to such a vast and heterogeneous field as PDA.

Recommendations

The evaluators' main proposal is to apply a **strategy of gradual** operational implementation of the PD, in five stages:

- 1 Acknowledge the heterogeneity of the PD's application scope.
- 2 Identify, with respect to the different dimensions of this field, the characteristics of 'ideal cases' with regard to which applying PD principles seems to be both the most pertinent and the least difficult.
- 3 Define and apply a strategy aimed at implementing the PD in these cases.
- 4 Draw the relevant lessons from this initial application by using an adapted information system, which is furthermore necessary to meet the fourth and fifth principles of the PD.
- 5 Gradually broaden the scope of application by adapting if necessary the operational criteria and possibly discussing once again the pertinence of applying certain principles according to the context.

A gradual approach based on an analysis of the characteristics of the application scope of the PD would allow France to:

- design the operational implementation of the PD under the best conditions,
- obtain more rapidly the necessary political agreements, because the fields of application will be limited and clearly defined,
- achieve concrete results more rapidly and be able to report them,