

REVIEW:

# RESULTS BASED MANAGEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

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30 November 2011



The review has been funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. Arguments and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the sponsor.

## Abstract

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This review aims to briefly introduce and analyse current literature on results-based management in development cooperation. Our review includes a summary and analysis of selected literature, research, blogs and presentations. The paper provides a brief historical overview of where and when results-based management was introduced to development cooperation, some lessons and experiences that can be drawn from evaluations and reviews on challenges and successes in its implementation, as well as a synopsis of the global initiatives that have arisen during the latest years in support of or as a response to the agenda.

One of the findings of the review is that the basic idea behind results-based management - i.e. that we need performance information to understand and adapt to development contexts and to make informed choices – seems uncontested by actors in development cooperation. However, the management practice, per se, has encountered severe challenges and difficulties in its implementation, and is being questioned by practitioners and researchers. Some successes are noted in larger partner-owned programmes and individual projects. Different results-based management approaches have been tried out over the course of development cooperation history, and the challenges seem to have been repeated. Some of the initiatives and theories that have arisen as a response to the agenda provide alternative ways and methods regarding how to understand complex development cooperation contexts.

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# 1. Background

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The discussion about what methods and approaches can best deliver tangible improvements to the world's poorest has been simmering since development assistance was borne.

During the past decade, against a backdrop of growing financial constraints and a tough global debate on the efficacy of aid, there has been considerable external pressure for development cooperation agencies to reorient their management systems towards effectiveness and results. Thus, results management systems have been introduced in most developed country government sectors, with ongoing implementation in most developing countries.

Fuelled by the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF-4) in Busan, South Korea, held in November-December 2011, the results agenda has received even more emphasis and is currently a top political priority.

Renewed scrutiny has intensified calls for accountability to tax-payers both in donor and recipient countries, and the need for results information to improve planning and analysis of what works. Also important to the discussion is that without demonstrable results, or effective provision of value for money, there is a risk of undermining the credibility of development cooperation, and that otherwise willing financiers might stay away.

At the same time, the results agenda has encountered a more structured criticism. Some believe that the agenda has narrowed the view of what is valued and how value is measured; and that it is counter-bureaucratically promoting an "obsessive measurement disorder"<sup>1</sup>, because the projects that are most transformational are also the least measurable. This issue has been debated in the media, in various influential spheres of aid and politics, and has manifested itself in the form of seminars such as: "Can Obsessive Measurement Disorder be avoided?"<sup>2</sup> or "A results take-over of aid effectiveness? -How to balance multiple or competing calls for more accountability"<sup>3</sup>.

A growing amount of literature and research points to the difficulties and challenges associated with implementing the results agenda within the development community. However, there exist examples of successes, as well as several recommendations - based on different theories - on how to improve results based management as it is currently practiced.

The aim of this paper is to briefly introduce and analyse the current literature on results-based management in development cooperation. It has been financed by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond under its current working group on goals and results in public administration (MOR gruppen). The group's central theme is to shed light on how targets are set and results are measured in public affairs. The paper will focus on the following questions: 1) Where and when was results-based management introduced to development cooperation? 2) Which lessons/experiences can be drawn from evaluations and reviews on challenges and successes in its implementation? 3) What type of global initiatives exist that support or question the agenda? 4) What are the trends and countertrends in the current debate?

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<sup>1</sup> Stated by Andrew Natsios in the paper "The clash of counter-bureaucracy and development"

<sup>2</sup> A seminar organised by the Nordic Africa Institute, FUF and Riksbankens Jubileumsfond in May 2011

<sup>3</sup> A seminar organised by ODI -Overseas Development institute in July 2011

These questions provide some guidance to the (discussed in the conclusions) question: Is it possible to successfully implement the results agenda this time?

### *About the authors*

This report has been written by individuals who bring different backgrounds and perspectives to the topic. We consider this to be an advantage. Our primary ambition has been to present an optimally nuanced image of the subject that embraces, and does not obscure, a variety of opinions and approaches.

**Janet Vähämäki** is a PhD-candidate at Uppsala University's Department of Education. She obtained previous practical experience as the Acting Head of the Department for Methodologies and Effectiveness at Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency), Advisor on Aid Effectiveness, and from longstanding experience in development cooperation both in the field (Honduras, South Africa and Brazil) and HQ.

**Martin Schmidt** is CEO of SPM Consultants in Stockholm and has worked with results-based management for Sida, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and international development agents since 1998. He participated in several "methods development projects" (Sida, UD, the Nordic + group) and worked as a long-term advisor to governments on planning and results-based management in joint sector programmes, including PEDP-II (Bangladesh), PROAGRI (Mozambique) and PRORURAL (Nicaragua).

**Joakim Molander** is *Head of Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden to Rwanda*, and has worked with issues concerning results-based management in education and development cooperation since 1998 as an evaluator, monitoring and evaluation advisor, evaluation manager, and head of Sida's evaluation department from 2008-2011. He holds a PhD in philosophy, and has taught research methodology and philosophy of science at Åbo Academy and the Mid Sweden University. His philosophy of science work has been published in *Vetenskapsteoretiska grunder. Historia och begrepp*.

## 2. Method and selection of literature

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This report is mainly a literature review. We have conducted a search of the literature for different chapter purposes (see below), have used literature from our own archives, and from select individuals in the field. Therefore this review does not provide a comprehensive perspective of all literature on the topic – there is certainly information and literature that we have missed.

Except from literature in the historical part of the study, we have mainly focused on literature from the latest decade, i.e. from 2000 and further.

Chapter 4 – Short historical overview: In the historical overview we have relied mainly on OECD/DAC evaluation and aid effectiveness publications from the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, including some of their main references. Also, management theory summaries and the works of early results management theorists have been consulted.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 - Experiences and current research. The reports used as the empirical basis for this chapter have been found by using the search words “development cooperation” “aid” “results based management” on Google Scholar and SCOPUS, on OECD/DAC’s webpage, on the webpages of the World Bank, IEG, Centre for Global Development etc.

Research reports have been found by searching in Development Journals, e.g.: Development in Practice, Public Administration and Development, European Journal of Development Research, International journal on Development Issues, International Human Resource Development and Management, Journal of Management Development, Oxford Development Studies, World Development and the IDS Bulletin.

We have found approximately 25 research articles dealing with results-based management and aid, around 7-8 evaluations/reviews on application of the model in donor agencies, and around 6-8 reports dealing with the application of RBM in partner countries. A full list of references is provided at the end.

In chapter 7 we have reviewed current blogs and discussion forums on results-based management. We have also followed up with telephone discussions with some representatives with regard to varying categories for different global initiatives<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “Initiatives supporting partner countries” – Marjolaine Nicod- OECD/DAC; Result Based Financing — Rita Perakis from the Centre for Global Development and in charge of the “Cash on Delivery-initiative”, and “Initiatives questioning the whole agenda” – Rosalind Eyben/Institute for Development Studies and founder of the Big Push Forward.

### 3. Concepts and definitions

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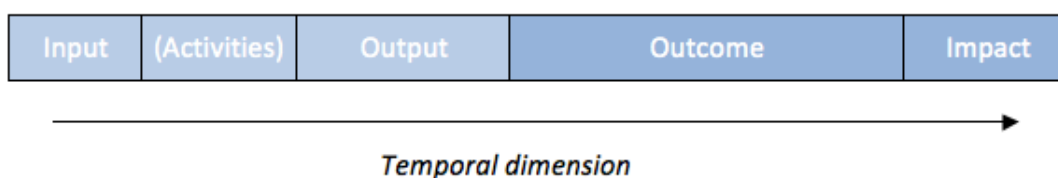
The subject of review in this paper is Results-based management (RBM) as it is currently being defined in development cooperation and more specifically by the OECD/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) who defines RBM as “A management strategy focusing on performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes and impact” (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, 2002).

The definition was subsequently expanded in a working paper commissioned by the Canadian International Development Agency –for consideration by the OECD/DAC. The following definition is from Meier (2003):

“Results-Based Management (RBM) is a management strategy aimed at achieving important changes in the way organisations operate, with improving performance in terms of results as the central orientation. RBM provides the management framework with tools for strategic planning, risk management, performance monitoring and evaluation. It’s primary purpose is to improve efficiency and effectiveness through organisational learning, and secondly to fulfil accountability obligations through performance reporting.”

In RBM the results management idea is conceptualised by way of an image. This image is used to illustrate a mind-set and takes the shape of a results chain<sup>5</sup>.

#### RESULTS CHAIN



The main idea is to demonstrate where the analytical starting point is – on the outcome/impact level - and that there are both temporal and causal dimensions to the sequence of events (chain) that lead to outcome and impact. In RBM, the idea is to arrive at a reasonable results-chain assumption, i.e. a strategy that says we expect X to happen if we do Y, and then monitor the merit of that assumption in implementation.

According to Meier the RBM language differs from precursors such as Management by Objectives and Logical Framework Approach (see next section 4), where significant differences lay in how RBM terms (input, output, outcome etc.) are defined in relationship to one another.

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Meier (2003) p. 7.

In 2005 the OECD/DAC adopted the term Management for Development Results (MfDR). In their Sourcebook on MfDR from 2006, it is stated that results-based management is nearly synonymous with MfDR, although it is claimed that some approaches to results-based management have focused only on accountability. MfDR is defined as going further by incorporating newer ideas about collaboration, partnership, country ownership, harmonisation, and alignment, and by providing a higher management standard by asking stakeholders to continuously focus on country outcome performance, rather than short-term results.

In the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), the term Managing for Results is used to denote the 4<sup>th</sup> (out of 5) principle of the Declaration under which “results-based management” and “results-oriented reporting and assessment frameworks” are highlighted as means towards achievement. In the declaration, managing for results “*means managing and implementing aid in a way that focuses on the desired results and uses information to improve decision-making*”. In clause 46, partners and donors jointly commit to “*work together in a participatory approach to strengthen country capacities and demand for results based management*”.

The literature<sup>6</sup> describing RBM refers unanimously to the importance of contextual adaptability. If circumstances or performance change, you should be ready as a manager (or organisation) to respond to that change, and alter your approach if necessary. The same literature refers to a set of elements that enable such a practice, which may be summarised as:

1. An analytic and performance-oriented approach to understanding what to do.
2. A view of performance that is centred on beneficiary level developments (outcomes), only thereafter moving on to identify what resources, activities, and immediate tangible results (outputs) are necessary to get there.
3. A need for information about your subject, and a capacity to collect, process and analyse that information over time.
4. A mechanism by which policy, planning, and decision-making can be influenced by performance information.

### *Purposes of RBM*

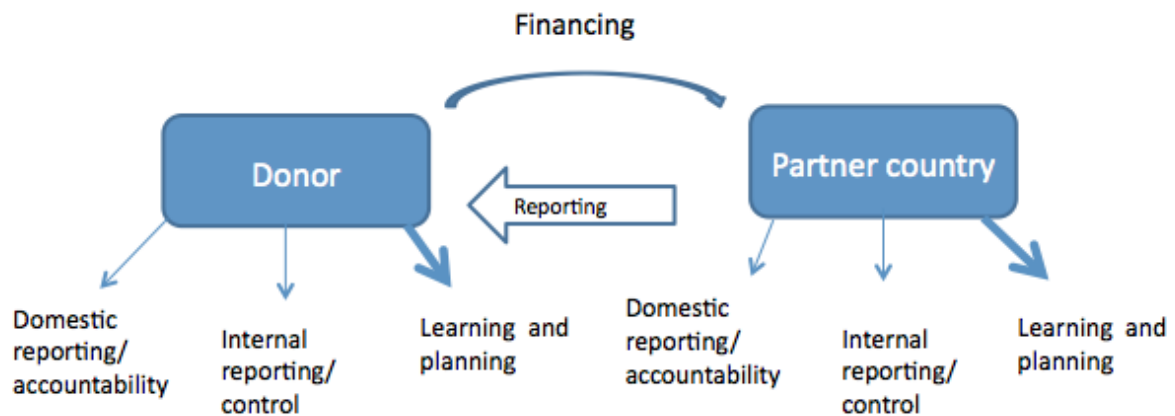
According to Ireland (2003) and Binnedjikt (2000), RBM serves two main purposes: management improvement (i.e. learning, improved decision making, and planning, etc.) and performance reporting (accountability). Some also use RBM for the purpose of performance-based budgeting – i.e. prioritising budget allocations based on performance information.

With regard to development cooperation, these purposes are valid for both the donor organisation and the partner country. Our understanding of the differing purposes is illustrated in the following figure:

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<sup>6</sup> See for eg. OECD/DAC MfDR Sourcebooks 2005, 2007 and 2008 for summaries and references. See also World Bank. (2004b). Implementation of the Agenda on Managing for Results: Progress Report and Annexes (CODE2004-0017). World Bank, Washington DC. Werner Meier, Discussion paper for consideration by the DAC Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and Harmonization, 2003; *Results-Based Management, Towards a Common Understanding Among Development Cooperation Agencies*. Moynihan, D. P. (2005); *Goal-Based Learning and the Future of Performance Management*, Public Administration Review 65(2): pp. 203-16. Mayne, John; *Best practices in results-based management, a review of experience*, a report for the United Nations Secretariat, July 2007.





The graphic serves to expand on the previously explained purposes of RBM with an external and internal reporting/accountability/control dimension, because many organisations differentiate between internal and external results-management practices. A differentiation is then made between internal results management within the agency; such as performance contracts for staff, and annual planning, budgeting and reporting cycles within the agency and performance information on how different departments/units have performed, etc. External results management is characterised by the results that are attributable to the performance of actions supported with development cooperation funds, and with accountability and demand that adhere to domestic constituencies, such as parliament and taxpayers.

It is clear from literature on the subject (see further evidence on this in chapter 4) that tensions exist between the different purposes, and that the main users value the purposes differently. Domestic reporting/accountability for citizens in donor countries is, for example, highly important for the government of a donor country, whereas demonstrating good internal control is of greater importance for the responsible agency.

Governments in donor countries often justify RBM by arguing that it improves accountability and learning/planning in partner countries. However, based on the evidence from the literature we have reviewed, our conclusion is that demand is low for using RBM or results information for those purposes in partner countries, and similarly for the purpose of learning within donor countries. One explaining variable is the existence of unequal power relations, often portrayed as a principal-agent problem, between the funder and the recipient/s paired with the fact that aid beneficiaries have limited influence of how results are defined in most development programmes. The funder provides support and demands something back from the recipient (e.g. results/reporting), and one frequent critique of aid is that the accountability of partners towards the donor is simply stronger than their accountability to their domestic citizens. Moreover, since development cooperation funds ultimately come from taxpayers in donor countries, results information from activities funded through development cooperation is mostly used for accountability to domestic audiences in donor countries, and to legitimise donor government policies in regard to development cooperation.

However, accountability mechanisms and RBM practices differ somewhat between bilateral donors and multilateral donors/international organisations. Bilateral donor RBM reform is normally a part of a government's general public management reform. Hence such reforms are designed for domestic policy implementation, rather than for development cooperation in third countries. This creates certain challenges, which we will come back to later. However, in contrast with bilateral donors, multilateral donors/international organisations are owned or chaired by different member states,

and normally need to report to different funders on results of their specific programmes. Different funders often require incongruous reporting and result formats, thereby, perhaps, making results-based management even more difficult for international organisations. However, international organisations do not have the same type of accountability requirements to domestic audiences as national administrations (i.e. bilateral donors) do.

### *Does one RBM-model exist? Some limitations in this review*

Much of the critique against RBM is aimed at its linear thinking and the technicalities involved in complex log frames, attribution, aggregation etc. However, it is clear from the literature that organisations apply the RBM model differently; different concepts are used and reforms are based on their different purposes and context. What is important depends on where demand comes from. Therefore: *A singular RBM model does not exist*, and we have not in this review thoroughly analysed how different organisations have interpreted RBM.

We also acknowledge that the achievement of results would be more or less effective with different results-based management strategies/models. However, we have not analysed if certain RBM strategies lead to comparatively better results, or are more effective per se – this would simply be a much larger task than we set out for this review.

We have analysed the implications of the introduction of the management perspective as such, as referred to in the literature and how evaluators/researchers have concluded that RBM has been applied in the organisation. Logically this is a limitation, because evaluation responses could vary depending on the purposes used during their introduction. However, as stated in chapter 4, we have found that the evaluations/reviews express quite similar experiences, and have thus - in this review - chosen to categorise the different experiences.

To make clear distinctions: in this review we will refer to the term *results-based management* (RBM) as the management perspective that was developed during the 1990s, and as defined by DAC (2002) and Meier 2003 (see above). With the term *results management*, we will refer to the much older general management idea of results-oriented management behaviour. This general idea will be outlined in the next chapter (4). We will also refer to the *results agenda*, by which we mean the specific drive in development cooperation that, through various policies and models, advocate and encourage the use of results-oriented management practices in aid delivery.

## 4. Short historical overview

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Tracing results management to a specific time or setting is not easily done. It has been a part of Management Theory in a broad sense throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the ideas and practices that are today associated with results-based management and related concepts in development aid probably began to form just around the Second World War. In the landmark paper *The Practice of Management* from 1954, Peter Drucker suggests that successful management is strongly associated with executives thinking about performance in a particular way. He notes that when managers analyse a situation and act from the point of view of performance, objectives, and results, they are significantly more successful than when they do so from the point of view of budgets and operation programmes. Drucker emphasises the learning aspect of this way of thinking, and discourages the application of deterministic or mechanical models to results management seen in other areas of management theory.

Drucker emphasises that his perspective is something that takes place foremost in the mind. When adopted by the manager, it has consequences for the way in which he or she organises working processes. In 1964, Drucker developed his perspective in the book *Managing for Results*. It focuses on strategic choice and the thought processes that use evidence and performance for making informed decisions. With this mind-set, managers engage in and encourage results-analyses and an open-minded approach where the main concern is adaptation in view of changing circumstances and performance, rather than control and predictability.

In *The Practice of Management* from 1954, Drucker had popularised the methodological concept of **Management by Objectives** (MBO). In the 1960s and 70s, MBO emerged and thrived in public administrations as well as in private businesses. MBO can best be described as a participatory working tool designed to focus the mind on what's important (objectives and performance). In fact, the tool more or less assumes that the pervading management perspective is not results oriented, but that it should become so through the use of MBO.

Rival or alternative systems of orienting management towards results developed soon thereafter. In 1969 USAID asked Leon J. Rosenburg of Fry Consultants to develop a model for development aid project management. The result was the **Logical Framework Approach** (LFA) which swiftly came into fashion. It spread unevenly from development aid to public administrations in OECD countries during the 1970s and 80s, and in the process was rebranded under new acronyms as it was adopted by new practitioners - **Goal Oriented Project Planning** (GOPP) and **Objectives Oriented Project Planning** (OOPP) are both close variants of the LFA.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s many OECD countries undertook extensive public sector reforms in response to economic, social, and political pressures. This process included a strong emphasis on results management. However, there was a simultaneous realisation that results-management was not the prevailing management perspective in public administrations. By contrast,

public management - and development aid management - had been characterised by their orientation towards budgeting, activity, and control (DAC 2000).

In the late 1960s, the *Planning, Programming and Budgeting Systems* (PPBS) approach put an emphasis on financial planning and cost accounting. In this perspective, the management of inputs, i.e. human resources and operating and capital costs, was of paramount importance in demonstrating management control over the allocation and use of financial resources. Both in public administrations and in development aid, this tradition promoted the *Programme Management By Activity* (PMBA) approach during the 1970s and 80s, combining several tools and techniques to plan and schedule activities (including e.g. the *Work Breakdown Structure*, WBS, the *Gantt Chart*, the *Critical Path Method*, CPM, and the *Programme Evaluation and Review Technique*, PERT). These approaches and techniques emphasised the implementation of activities according to a planned schedule, and were derived from the fields of construction engineering and systems management. In a sense, they represented an alternative to Drucker's theories of the 1940s and 50s regarding the character of successful management.

In a parallel development, the 1970s, 80s, and 90s saw a number of approaches that combined results management with financial management. In the business sphere, the **Corporate Performance Management** (CPM) approach brought together budgets and results-orientation with a view to associate costs with achieved results. In the 1980s and 90s the **Performance-based budgeting** (PBB) approach surfaced in public administration and development aid with a similar view to budgeting and performance management. Although powerfully influential, these approaches had difficulty achieving widespread recognition in public management.

In 1997 the OECD published a report - *In Search of Results: Public Management Practices* - that examined the public reform efforts of the past decade in ten OECD countries. It concluded that variants of results management had been a prominent, even dominant, feature in all ten. This is also the period in which results management became a basic component of modern public management practices (Meier 2003).

In Canada, one of the ten countries of the OECD study, the Auditor General and the Treasury Board Secretariat had been the primary promoters of public reform and performance management. During the early 1990s this is probably where the term **Results-Based Management** (RBM) was coined. During the 1990s it was introduced incrementally in several bilateral and multilateral agencies in development cooperation (DAC 2000, p. 13<sup>7</sup>). Here, RBM represents a return to the notions of Drucker, and his insistence on successful results orientation as a mind-set and a perspective on management, rather than a precise set of instructions.

RBM can also be viewed in the context of the **New Public Management** (NPM) philosophy introduced in the 1980s which was intended to modernise public management by making it more market oriented. Several terms have been used in NPM to denote a results management approach. In development aid, RBM became the preferred demarcation, and in the first years of the new

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<sup>7</sup> Binnendijk notes five bilateral and two multilateral agencies with considerable experience in establishing results-based management systems; USAID, AusAID, DANIDA, DFID, CIDA, World Bank, and the UNDP.

millennium it was adopted by the OECD/DAC and subsequently by the development community at large.

With MBO, LFA and their variations, the results management idea had been applied in practical methods, step-by-step models and tool kits - in LFA, the original Rosenberg working tool is a 26 field results-matrix summarising project logic. By contrast, in RBM, focus is diverted away from individual operations to the working and planning processes of an organisation and its environment, thus proposing a results-oriented perspective at the heart of organisational thinking and practice.

This is not to say, however, that RBM implementation in the 1990s was adopted as it was intended. In fact, a series of studies from the time of the OECD 1997 study on public reforms concluded that a more holistic RBM approach was truly challenging because of its organisation-wide ambition and coverage (a summary and extensive review of this literature is found in Mayne 2007). An alternative approach to analytic and outcome oriented thinking, **outcome mapping**, was introduced in 2001 by the IDRC (International Development Research Centre). Outcome mapping builds on Barry Kibel's Outcome Engineering approach and aims at shifting the focus of results management both from organisational performance (outputs) and impact (seen as significant and large scale changes in society caused by development interventions). Instead it focuses on *outcomes* defined as changes in the behaviour, relationships and actions of the people, groups, and organizations *with whom a programme works directly*. The idea is that a management approach which is aimed at helping programme learning and improvement (as is the core of RBM), needs to be focused on results which can be attributed to the programme itself. According to Sarah Earl, Fred Carden and Terry Smutylo who developed the method, this contrasts with the traditional approach in development cooperation, where donors expect accountability for impacts over which no single agency has control or can realistically claim full credit. (Earl, Carden Smutylo 2001)

#### 4.1. Results management in development cooperation in the 1990s

The results agenda in development received renewed emphasis in the 1990s. As part of a global discussion on the most effective strategies for financing development interventions, studies on progress in developing countries continuously indicated that a majority of development aid had, at best, marginal and short lived effects. The international response to these experiences was to challenge the "project mode" of cooperation.

Throughout the history of development cooperation, a vast expansion has taken place in a number of institutions and actors in developing countries. In part, this expansion can be attributed to "project-mode" co-operation, which exponentially increases the availability of short-term financing via a series of small-scale, unrelated, and uncoordinated contributions. By the early 1990s, the situation was at such a pitch that almost all evaluations of development projects concluded that they seldom achieved targets beyond their own internal life. Almost by default, country and sector-wide studies uncovered duplications, (vast) omissions, conflicting practices, and unsustainable results wherever they turned their attention.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In a study by Forrester and McLoughlin, *Sector Wide Approaches and Financial Accountability*, Dublin 1998, the authors convincingly summarise the adverse consequences of project support. The message from the collected experience of the development community was that no matter how successful the individual project, the majority failed to leave traces

Thus was it concluded that fragmentation in project development cooperation made it difficult for national public reforms to be pursued in a sensible way. Policy makers could not achieve the overview necessary to make sound priorities with scarce resources. A multitude of projects, approaches and actors obscured strategic choice. As a result, existing records of sector performance were mostly fragmented or non-existent (EC 2002).

The immediate effect was that programme support came into swing. Large investment programmes had already developed by the 1980s. Particularly, the development banks had introduced larger and more comprehensive “structural adjustment programmes”, i.e. programmes with the goal of reducing fiscal imbalances in developing countries. However, these were still overwhelmingly bilateral affairs, involving a donor agency/bank and a recipient government, and thereby taking the shape of very large projects. What mainly set them apart from the next generation of “programmes” that was to follow in the 1990s, was their often limited sector coverage and low levels of domestic ownership/stewardship. In the 1990s, programmes were to be based on a national strategy, and attempted to summon all major donors in a sector under the same framework. The programme definition essentially became what appeared in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness more than a decade later<sup>9</sup>. During this transformation process, more specifically, experiences began to assemble that pointed to the need to push the results management agenda a step further. Two broad strands of development can be identified.

The first is that the existing project results management idea was widely criticised. Results frameworks, often manifested in an LFA results matrix, were seldom if ever put to use in day-to-day project management. Experience instead indicated that the matrices were filled out at the beginning of a project, only to be brought back years later when it was time for an evaluation<sup>10</sup>. This meant that results management was limited. Reports indicated that results-oriented tools introduced an initial focus on objectives (in the sense that they were justified). However, during implementation, projects remained inflexible and unresponsive to outcome developments because they were not monitored until it was too late, if at all. It was also concluded that tools such as the LFA were considered by its practitioners as add-ons to already existing management practices. Critics also pointed to the fact that the LFA model was itself never evaluated, that the model created mistrust within organisations, and that causal thinking required by the model introduced difficulties in project management. (Des Gasper, 2000 and Eyben)

The second is that when joint programmes began bringing several donors together over joint strategies, the inter-agency dialogue revealed wild differences in results perspectives, terminology, typologies, and the general meaning of results management and associated objectives and indicators. (EU 2002) This happened simultaneously with the realisation of the growing need for solid information to guide programme priorities and strategic choice. With a stroke, the “national” or “sector programme”, because of its coverage, had brought development aid affairs up alongside

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beyond their own confines. As a group, with individual exceptions of course, they failed to impact positively on sector or national development. This was a truly disappointing finding.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix A to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, *Methodological notes of the indicators of progress*, note on indicator 9.

<sup>10</sup> This practice is part of what is sometimes referred to as an *ex-post evaluation tradition* in development aid; in contrast with a results oriented management perspective. In this tradition evaluations are conducted when operations are concluded, often as a way of identifying lessons learned and formulating best practices. In a results oriented perspective, monitoring and evaluation is part of implementation.

national policy-making. This had only seldom been the case in project mode cooperation. The need for quality information - and reliable time-series of it - was brought to a different level.

When agency representatives collaborated during the 1990s, the diaspora of results management tools from varying development agencies, including the MBO and LFA, were being brought back together again. As a result, the many manifestations of tools were put on display, resulting in a deep and lingering confusion. (EC 2002 Guidelines)

The confusion was not only due to different results perspectives and tools; it was also a consequence of a mounting organisational resistance to results management. Alternative management perspectives, prescriptive and process oriented, were still very much at the heart of organisational thinking. These findings indicated that the results perspective, which suggested adaptation to local conditions and an analytical and critical approach, was challenging the foundations of Western development aid policies which were, and still are, very much centred on “their own” policy objectives. (DAC peer reviews 1998-2007, Hervio et al 2000)

## 4.2. The rationale for RBM in development cooperation

Towards the end of the 1990s, and beginning of the 2000s, the RBM perspective was formed against a backdrop of lessons including difficulties of project aid, low levels of ownership, and unclear development results. A new rationale for results orientation in development aid emerged that took on a different shape from that which had motivated LFA and its siblings three decades earlier - basically intent of sharpening project logic and results achievement.

Several studies pointed towards the need to deal with what were seen as structural problems in development cooperation. And results-oriented practices, or the lack of them, came to the centre of attention. In the year 2000, a broad in-country evaluation under Hervio (Hervio et. al. 2000) drew some notable conclusions about the non results-oriented practices in programme aid during the previous decade:

- a. Reform programmes had been pursued with little regard for local context and with an overwhelming stress on a conditionality of measures – thus lowering ownership and obscuring reform content and rationale for national decision-makers.
- b. Programmes essentially had been run without continuous follow-up mechanisms to trace sector outcome developments over time – meaning that key policy decisions as well as key programme priorities had been set without proper knowledge of sector or programme performance.

The study created a stir for its conclusions and recommendations for a shift in mind-set. It suggested the need to:

- Conduct a constructive reform dialogue with partners from the point of view of sector performance, rather than conditionality, budget execution, or activities.
- Make overall strategic choices based to a larger extent on country development patterns.
- Make sound programme priorities based on analyses of country and programme outcomes.

A series of other studies came to similar conclusions during this period (for a guide and summary see White and Dijkstra 2003). The rationale for a renewed and reoriented focus on results that emerged included<sup>11</sup>:

1. Increasing **contextualisation** – national development patterns (outcome/impact) should guide strategy – as a means to **stimulate a capacity for national policy making**;
2. To **regularly monitor** national, sector and programme performance on outcome level so that priorities could adapt over time in response to changing conditions, and in the process **strengthen national performance assessment frameworks** to support future policy and decision-making;
3. Promoting a **dialogue based on performance** rather than prescriptions or budget and activity programmes to **promote ownership** and joint understanding.

Summarising this far, in the historical overview of results management practices in development aid recurrent problems with application stand out. In most settings, it seems the idea is at odds or crowding with other management ideas and practices. Much reported is a tendency to translate the results management idea into formal or mechanistic models in contrast with analytic, adaptable and learning oriented thinking. Other regular problems include finding the right level of analysis, the right indicators, and troubles with attribution. Against such observations it is often deduced that results management has not been put to use as prescribed, which may also serve to conclude this chapter.

#### 4.3 Global goal setting in development cooperation

During the course of development cooperation history, some attempts have been made to set global goals<sup>12</sup>. Here we will mention some of the goals that have been perhaps the most influential in development cooperation: 1) The 0,7% disbursement goal –the HOW MUCH –goal 2)The Millennium Declaration, from 2000, with its goals on WHAT to do and 3)The Paris Declaration, from 2005, with its goals and principles on HOW to do it.

By the 1960s strenuous discussions were taking place on the size and volume of aid required to result in poverty reduction in the world. A UN conference in 1973 determined that the percentage of a country's GDP to be utilised for development cooperation should be 0.7%<sup>13</sup>. Since then the disbursement goal has been hotly debated – with much pressure and competition regarding disbursement totals at project, programme, and global levels, and additional funding required to meet the goals. Also within aid administrations, disbursements are continuously monitored.<sup>14</sup> This approach has encountered a lot of criticism, for example by Moss (2011) who argues that a goal

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<sup>11</sup> See the Memorandums of the High Level Roundtables on Development Results in Washington (2002) and Marrakech (2004), and the OECD/DAC working party on aid effectiveness; *Managing for development results, principles in action*, April 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Already in the 70s efforts were made to agree on a joint goal to reduce poverty reduction (see for eg. Odén 2006). However, through the MDGs a joint agreement on development goals in various areas were made.

<sup>13</sup> However, in a research paper by Moss (2007) the origins of the 0,7 % disbursement goal are discussed. The paper shows that it arose from an economic model with no modern credibility, and that – contrary to conventional wisdom – none of the UN documents contains a promise to meet the goal. They state that they have actually not found a target has actually no was mostly arbitrary, based on a series of assumptions that no longer are true, and justified by a model that is no longer considered credible.

<sup>14</sup> For actors other than nations, such as NGOs or IGOs, the disbursement goal has equivalents in the need to attract and spend as much as possible to safeguard organisations and to lobby/advocate particular objectives before others.



divorced from political realities is counterproductive as a lobbying tool, and that assessing financing needs in developing countries is extremely difficult. A financing goal tells us nothing about the realities in developing countries. This view seems to be commonly supported by practitioners in development cooperation. However, despite this, the disbursement goal has perhaps always been the most practical and powerful goal in development cooperation.

Goals oriented to WHAT to do arose with the UN Millennium Declaration (2000), and with it the Millennium Development Goals, MDG. The MDGs formulate eight goals and 21 targets to be achieved by 2015 and provided for the first time in development cooperation history common results to be achieved on a global level.

With the Millennium Declaration, the OECD/DAC embarked on a course that was to culminate in 2005 in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which was to demonstrate a global understanding on HOW to achieve the MDGs. In the process, the results management perspective became an integral part of global development aid policy. Out of the five principles of the Paris Declaration, two points directly to results management practices (*Managing for Results* and *Mutual Accountability*). Both partner countries and donors committed in the Declaration “to strengthening results-based management in development cooperation”. The principle of ownership was highlighted as a prerequisite for the other principles in the Declaration.

A series of international agreements and declarations preceded and followed the Paris Declaration.<sup>15</sup> In part, these repeated affirmations of the principles of the Declaration - ownership, harmonisation, alignment, managing for results, and mutual accountability - also confirm a struggle to enforce a new development agenda. Some development partners opposed the agenda with arguments that it was an attempt by countries in the North to impose their conditions on countries in the South. Within donor administrations, the agenda met criticism for trying to impinge upon the complex relations in development cooperation. Obviously, the agenda proposed changes to the methods of managing development cooperation, and the call for reinforced results orientation was a prominent element alongside the call for programme-based approaches.

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<sup>15</sup> Monterrey Consensus (2002); Washington: First Roundtable on Development Results (2002); Rome Declaration (2003); Marrakech: Second Roundtable on Development Results (2004); Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005); Hanoi: Third Roundtable on Managing for Development Results (2007); Accra: Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (2008); Busan: High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (2011).

## 5. Experiences from evaluations and reviews

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In this chapter we will provide an overview of challenges as well as lessons from the introduction of results-based management in development cooperation. We will use three organisational levels to illustrate the experiences. The first level - the establishment of performance measurement and management systems at the corporate or agency-wide level - is where we have found and reviewed the most experiences and evaluations. The second level – the longest established and experienced, where most development cooperation interventions still take place - is the project level. At the project level result frameworks (such as a Logical Framework Approach) support an individual project. The third level - where a significant amount of development has taken place during the past decade - is the partner country level. At this level, development cooperation has been provided in the form of capacity development to improve partners' own performance-based systems, or within a larger donor-partner country program – such as budget or programme support to a country's Poverty Reduction Strategy or Sector Strategy, aligned to the country's financial and performance management systems..

We have used the following literature as empirical background for the levels listed above:

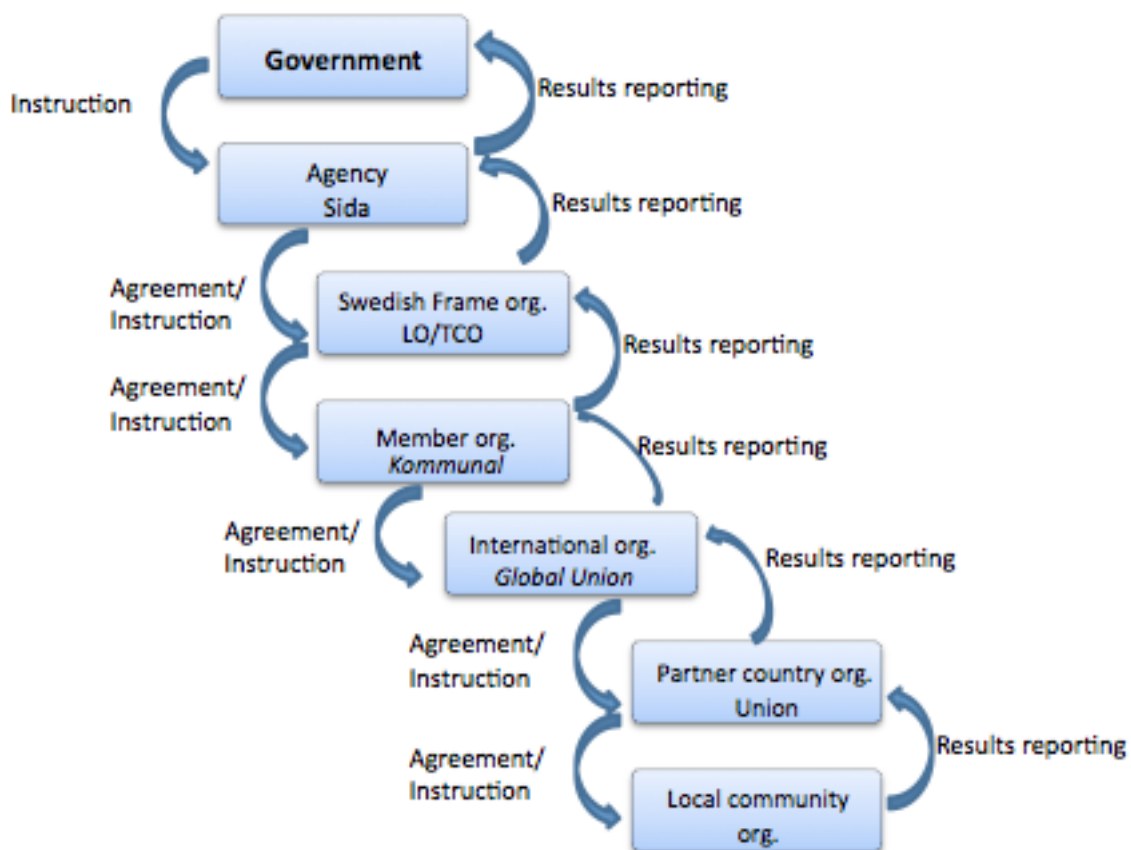
1. Evaluations and reviews conducted of donor RBM- systems:
  - a) A review of experience of RBM in Development Cooperation Agencies. The review covered USAID, Australian-AusAID, Danish -DANIDA, United Kingdoms -DFID, Canadian -CIDA, World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme-UNDP. Submitted by OECD/DAC Working Party on Evaluation and conducted by Annette Binnedjikt (2000)
  - b) Evaluation of RBM at the United Nations (2008)
  - c) Evaluation of RBM at the UNDP (2007)
  - d) A Review of RBM in multilateral development Institutions, "Easier Said than done". The review covered UNDP, UNICEF, UNIFEM, Interamerican Development Band –IDB, and the World Bank- WB and was conducted by Michael Flint (2003).
  - e) Evaluation of Result Based Approach by Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Finland (2011)
  - f) Evaluation of results management in Swedish Development Cooperation, by Statskontoret (2011)
  - h) Andrew Natsios paper on "The clash of counterbureaucracy" –about implementation of RBM at the USAID (2010)
  - g) Management for Development Results Sourcebook by the OECD/DAC with some examples on the implementation of RBM in some donor agencies, such as the Canadian International Development Agency (Cida) (2005)
  - h) Report on Donor Result Reporting by Gilroy Management with experiences from USA, Germany and UK (2011)
  - i) A summary report from OECD/DAC on DAC Peer Reviews, with experiences summarised from all OECD/DAC members (2011)
2. Experiences from project level. Reports and evaluations that led to the Paris Declaration, and examples often related by the OECD/DAC but also by individual donors on practices that try to implement a result focus at the project level, including: a) selected DAC Peer

Reviews 1998, b) DAC sourcebooks on Managing for development results 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, c) INTRAC 2005, d) Forrester and Macloughlin (1998), e) Sida internal evaluations 2004 and 2006.

3. Evaluations and reports from implementation of a results focus in partner countries and larger programmes, including: a) OECD/DAC Progress in implementing the Paris Declaration 2011, b) The evaluation of Budget support conducted by IDD and Associates (2006) that evaluates experiences of General Budget Support in Burkina Faso, Malawi, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Uganda, Vietnam c) WB-report on results oriented national development strategies (2007) d) Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) of the World Bank, Annual Review of Aid Effectiveness, 2008

In some parts, we have also used articles and other forms of research to illustrate the findings.

In general, the management chains can be numerous and quite complicated in development cooperation. Our previous experience tells us that it is not unusual that management chains constitute between 5-7 relations. The following picture attempts to illustrate the different management chains for a Sida funded Civil Society support to a partner country trade union:



Obviously, there exist a number of difficulties in attributing results and possibilities for the principal financier to steer/control results achieved to the lowest level. Also the challenges are perhaps

greatest for actors in the middle of the chain because they stand in between instructions on results to be achieved, and pushing for results to be achieved without sufficient control.<sup>16</sup>

## 5.1. Experiences from donor institutional level

Donor organisations have understood and adapted RBM in varying ways. Based on the literature reviewed, we have found that the challenges and lessons faced in the implementation of RBM are quite similar for donor organisations, be they multilateral or bilateral agencies. As a result, we have only used information provided in evaluations and reviews on how the application of the model has succeeded (according to the respective organisation's understanding of the model). In this chapter, we will only use evaluations and reviews regarding experience-based challenges and successes. While most of the experiences refer to challenges, a few successes are also noted. In general, the literature implies very weak positive effects from the application and implementation of RBM. All evaluations and reviews do, however, provide recommendations for improvement, with the inclusion of experience from lessons and "best practices". Since the recommendations, lessons and best practices are more based on an ideology of how RBM ought to work, and not actually based on experience, we have separated and categorised them in chapter 8.

General challenges in implementation encountered in the evaluations and reviews are:

### *Shortcomings in the original design of the model*

All of the reports raise the issue of the challenges with the application of the Result-Based Model itself. In most organisations the method is translated into results frameworks used at different organisational levels (country level, project level, programme level, and individual performance level). We have not analysed to what extent organisations attempt to attribute results from one level to another, but it seems as if some organisations have experimented with attributing for example project-level results to the results in the organisation's country strategy (e.g. Sida). Some organisations try to attribute internal and external results – for example that an individual manager's performance is judged by the performance of the project that the manager is responsible for (e.g. USAID). Most organisations do not seem to correlate funding decisions to projects/programmes with performance. However, organisations such as DfiD have introduced performance contracts with their field offices, where funding to the country portfolio is connected to results in the country programme. However, it seems that many organisations are still at the early stages of developing management models where greater attribution is made between the different levels.

Probably the most cited challenge related to the method/model itself is the difficulty in selecting appropriate, objective indicators that measure relevant results rather than activities. However, it

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<sup>16</sup> An interesting blog post (in Swedish) on this topic is written by Kajsa Johansson, representative of a Swedish CSO in Mozambique, who writes about "My life as a hamburger", describing how the organisation is squeezed between result requirements from the top levels, and with the task to see to it that results are achieved and reported by local level organisations with very limited experience with RBM.

<http://kajsajohansson.wordpress.com/2010/01/13/mitt-liv-som-hamburgare/>

Also, Curtis (2004), discusses this topic from a consultant's point of view. He states that due to power relations in development cooperation, the donor agent controls the resources, and the message becomes rules of access and performance. The broker (in this case the consultant) is left to make the most of the situation, looking for room for maneuver - sometimes in vain.

seems as if the selection of appropriate indicators could be easier in some sectors, and specifically in sectors such as education, where there exist jointly agreed upon global monitoring indicators, for example the Education For All Framework. There seems to be general difficulty in managing for outcomes rather than outputs, and establishing a link between inputs to impacts across the results chain. Many reviews are critical that planned-for results lack credible methods for verification, and that performance measures lack baselines and targets (UN, UNDP). Also commonly cited are difficulties in aggregating data and attributing results to aid-funded projects and programmes.

The MfDR-sourcebook concludes that results frameworks tend to become overly complex with an excessive numbers of indicators, and despite adherence to the notion of using a results framework as a “living management tool”, that it is difficult to keep the framework sufficiently lightweight.

Some reviews bring up time-aspect difficulties, e.g. the unrealistic goal of actually tracking outcomes on an annual basis (Sida, USAID, UN). Natsios, a former director at USAID, argues that the search for quick outcomes has diverted attention to more easily measured outcomes at the expense of those less easily observed or counted; and that this practice has led to more funding being provided for development sectors in hard sciences, such as public health and medicine, and less to softer sciences such as democracy and governance programmes.

However, despite all challenges the OECD/DAC summary report from DAC Peer Reviews has determined that most DAC-members find that the stronger focus on results - inherent in the aid effectiveness principles - helps to broaden support for aid, and that it also helps drive a cultural change in how the programmes are managed. In the wake of the Millennium and Paris Declarations some donors also seem to report progress towards result orientation<sup>17</sup>.

### *Difficulties with non-usage for the original purposes*

Many of the evaluations and reviews report on difficulties where results information is not being used for improved decision-making, budgeting and prioritisation purposes, and/or strategic and policy debate. The UN-review strongly concludes that “*RBM in the United Nations has been an administrative chore of little value to accountability and decision-making*” and that “*results-based management processes have been found to have made virtually no contribution to strategic decisions in any of the reviewed organizations*”.

The findings of the Gilroy report - that reviewed 12 donor reports, and the prevalence of differing RBM elements (baselines, targets, result-chains etc) - are a bit more positive. It found that some of the reviewed results reports were indeed used for learning and management purposes. Yet, it also found that only one report out of twelve reviewed had all of the RBM elements (baselines, targets, result-chains, etc.) present, while an additional four of the reports reviewed had most of the RBM elements.

Several of the documents discuss why results information is not used. Reasons relate to the original design, difficulties with tracking causal linkages, and also difficulties in measurement and data-collection. Several reviews also point to tensions between using the information for management

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<sup>17</sup> This seem to be true at least for Cida, Dfid, WB and ADB – according to Peer Reviews and their own assessment.

improvement, or for accountability reporting (DAC, Multi-review). The UN-evaluation points to the fact that RBM has been introduced as an add-on to pre-existing rules and procedural requirements, and that a lack of relaxation in other procedures has caused more administrative burdens. Non-usage is also attributed to a lack of leadership, staff motivation, and incentives to use the results. The UN-review concludes that there are no consequences for non-compliance or non-attainment of results. Other explanations for non-use of results information can be found in the following sections and chapters.

### *Difficulties in application in development cooperation as such*

In addition to the experiences mentioned in a-c, which seem to be quite similar to experiences faced in other public-sector agencies<sup>18</sup>, the introduction of RBM in development cooperation seems to face some specific challenges. According to Binnedjikt, the establishment of performance measurement systems can be more complex and costly in development cooperation than in other public agencies. Aid agencies work in many different countries and contexts, where the causality chains between funded activities and possible outcomes and impacts are exceptionally long and complex. In addition, donors need to rely on outcome and impact data collected by the partners. These partners, whether within government, academia, or the private sector, have limited technical capacity and resources. Furthermore, they normally lack registry data of population, taxes, transfers, etc. that can be found in developed countries, and is often used for data analysis and sampling. Reliable qualitative data is non-existent in many countries. Further confounding the problem is that development cooperation often involves areas where results are difficult to measure – such as capacity building, institutional and policy reforms, and good governance.

Most evaluations and reviews point to the difficulties of building RBM systems at the donor institutional level due to weak development country capacity, the influence on outcomes by multiple unchecked actors, and external risk factors, etc. The weak development country capacity leads to donors not using results-oriented and monitoring frameworks in partner countries, which in turn prevents such systems from being improved.

The evaluation of RBM in Swedish Development cooperation states that there are too many conflicting goals in results frameworks at different levels in the organisation which makes it difficult for managers to know what to prioritise, and subsequently for the priorities of the government to be fulfilled. Since development cooperation activities operate in so many policy areas, and have so many actors and interests, it seems as though the amount of potential goals to be fulfilled are larger than in other policy areas.

### *Conflicting purposes*

Several of the reports refer to conflicting purposes when introducing RBM in development cooperation. The following conflicting purposes are commonly cited in the literature: a) The dual role of introducing RBM internally, while at the same time supporting partner country governments in the implementation of RBM reform (Multi-Review, Binnedjikt); b) the conflict between result reporting/accountability on the one side, and the use of information for learning/improved

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<sup>18</sup> See for example Sundström (x) and Lindgren (y) and Ordonez (2009)

management on the other side; c) the need to demonstrate results that can lead to risk-averse behaviour versus the need to engage in important initiatives that have less quantifiable outcomes, or entail higher risks (PD-Evaluation, DAC Peer Review report, Natsios etc.). Another conflicting purpose (not directly cited in the evaluation literature, but based on experience) is the conflict between the disbursement goal/pressure and results.

As for the first conflict, between partner countries and donor results interests, our review of the literature confirms that many donors seem to face a tension between reporting on domestic goals, and aligning with the interest of partners. The DAC Peer review summary report addresses that one of the largest challenges for donors is selecting and using indicators that are consistent with partners' national development strategies and monitoring frameworks. Many agencies still feel the need to attribute results to the respective country/donor intervention, whereas clear attribution is usually not possible. The domestic demand for accountability (from domestic constituencies, parliaments, senior management, executive boards etc.) is also usually difficult to combine with an agenda of supporting partner-country priorities and interventions. The MfDR-review states that there are currently only a few examples of donors that have actually been prepared to "lower the flag", and suspend their individual procedures in favour of joint strategies, decreasing the number of individual voices at the table, and becoming silent partners represented by other donors.

With regard to the second conflict – the use of RBM for external accountability or learning purposes – our review of the literature confirms that results information seem to mainly have been used for the purpose of accountability needs/reporting purposes in donor countries, and less so for learning purposes within the organisations.

As for the third conflict, for example Andrew Natsios claims that the results agenda has created incentives that threaten good development practice. Natsios uses the term counter-bureaucracy for this phenomenon as it threatens a central principle of development theory - *that those development programmes that are most precisely and easily measured are the least transformational, and those programmes that are most transformational are the least measurable*. He also claims that the RBM agenda within USAID has led to clashes between compliance officers and technical programme specialists (in health, agriculture, education, etc.) over attempts to measure and account for everything; and that this has led to more risk-averse behaviour, and the compromise of good development practices. Similar warning signals of these conflicts are raised in the evaluation reports – that these conflicting purposes can disempower operational managers and partners, stifle innovation and flexibility, create adverse incentives, etc.

Some have reported that these conflicting purposes are strong enough to be counterproductive. The UNDP-evaluation for example concludes that *"The introduction of corporate systems and tools, which have had some efficiency benefits, have not, however, strengthened the culture of results in the organization or improved programmatic focus at the country level."* Furthermore, the UN-evaluation determines that the overly formalistic approach to codifying outcomes has stifled the innovation and flexibility required to achieve those outcomes. The evaluation thus concludes that *"the determination of development success does not lend itself to impartial, transparent and precise measurement"*.

### *Lack of human resources, capacity and incentives*

Many of the challenges expressed in the evaluations relate to a lack of human capacity, knowledge, or incentives to fulfil the complex requirements demanded by an RBM-approach. Many reports seem to raise the issue that officials within the agencies no longer have time for implementing programmes, and that a lot of time and efforts is wasted on data collection, reporting, and control. Some reports have addressed a shortage of time to do analysis of the indicators, and that there are not sufficient support mechanisms for the analysis. Binnedjikt notes that officers claim that data collection is not considered directly relevant or useful, and is only being used to “report upward”. Furthermore, there is too much concern over indicator/data validity, which may limit its practical utility as a motivational and management tool. The Finnish evaluation concludes that it is not the quality of the guidelines that is at fault. The evaluation claims that there is too little competence and understanding of the method within the organisation. This conclusion is similar to that of the Swedish evaluation – that different actors within the management chain have difficulties understanding the system. In contrast, the OECD/DAC has come to the conclusion that donors with adequate human and financial resources, and who have placed a strong emphasis on maintaining cohesion and ensuring quality across the programme, obtain better aid results (Peer Review Summary Report).

## 5.2. Experiences from project level

### *Struggle with results oriented project development tools*

As regards project mode development cooperation the literature suggests a general struggle with results oriented project development tools (LFA, GOPP etc.). Recurring themes include

1. The tools are too “project specific” in scope to influence overall planning, and
2. The tools are too “limited from a management perspective” to challenge prevailing management practices, which are generally, but not always, process and control oriented.

It has been suggested that organisational cultures are unlikely to be affected by isolated or limited efforts to change them. In sum, no one seems to argue that project-level results management has had much effect on donor or partner organisational behaviour. On the contrary, repeated donor internal evaluations and DAC peer-reviews suggest that rather than stimulating a results focus in developing aid management, results oriented tools and matrices at the project level have been regarded as requirements, and add-ons, to activity or process oriented management practices. (Sida 2004, DAC Peer Reviews 1998-2009) Perhaps the most persistent concern is that project level management tools (such as LFA) have not, overall, been used as prescribed. In LFA, the idea is that managers should be vigilant to the development of risk factors and results indicators, and come up with a management response if required. Instead, it has been suggested that the LFA matrix, because it has been neglected during implementation and regarded much as a prescription/requirement, has rather perpetuated static implementation procedures (INTRAC 2005).

One way of looking at this is by observing the traditional relationship between financier and implementer of projects; using the matrix/tool as an instrument of assessment of the



project/implementing agents rather than as a living instrument of learning and change in view of performance or altered conditions (INTRAC 2005, Sida 2004, 2006).

### *Too many fragmented efforts – limited effects on overall level*

Project mode cooperation also has a history of supporting its own “project internal” information needs. Project reporting is striking because of the overwhelming abundance of information directly linked to implementation (the input-activity-output levels of the results chain). In larger projects, the need for contextual information has generally been viewed as greater; and in particular, the multilateral banks have a record of supporting monitoring and evaluation capacities with local counterparts. At times, the demand for information has covered development patterns and behavioural changes among populations and organisations outside the realm of the project, thus leading to efforts to support national statistical systems.

However, in part because of un-coordinated donor activities, systems development has also been un-coordinated. Weak national systems have been vulnerable to the introduction of inconsistent methodologies, terminologies, and approaches to systems development as initiated by a variety of donors. There is an ongoing initiative - PARIS21 - that has repeatedly pointed towards these conclusions, and the need for more concerted efforts (PARIS21, 2009).

### *Successful when adapted to local conditions*

Most project results management tools are concerned with a participatory process of identification, and joint agreement on objectives and indicators at the beginning of operations. In this capacity, they are often reported as having had a positive impact on project logic. When application is successful, ensuing strengths are shared objectives between stakeholders and a real adaptation to local conditions.

At the project level, recorded positive experiences are mostly, but not always, related to larger projects and countries outside the group of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). For example, increased results management have been reported to improve ownership, and in aligning planning and reporting with national systems. (OECD/DAC Sourcebooks 2005, 2007 and 2008) A typical example is reported by Simon Delay in his article “Why does Aid Management in Samoa succeed?”, which concludes that aid management in Samoa is unusually successful for the region. The success factors owe to the involvement of high-level leadership (donor coordination is chaired by the Prime Minister) in aid coordination and the capacity and stability of key staff. He declares that there is a well functioning aid coordination system in Samoa, and that the government has taken a clear lead over the process – “*the government is unusually willing to articulate its desires and to reject approaches and individual activities which did not fit with its priorities.*” Moreover the success depends on the integration of donor project planning and reporting with national planning processes. Technical assistance has been used, but Samoa has maintained ownership over the process.

In 2008 the IEG concluded that in World Bank supported projects, there is a positive relationship between project achievement and the strength of the monitoring and evaluation system. Importantly, the strength of the monitoring and evaluation system was characterised by its level of

outcome orientation. IEG observed a positive correlation between ratings of project outcome and monitoring and evaluation systems. More outcome related monitoring and evaluation systems resulted in better project outcome level performance. An inverse relationship was also confirmed (IEG 2008, pp. 21-23).

It is important that partners agree on successful results orientation leading to better dialogue, better planning, ownership and alignment. Perhaps more importantly, outcome performance may be positively related to the strengths of the monitoring system (defined by its level of results orientation). But these findings do not address the issues of project-level fragmentation as an inherent challenge to a results management perspective in development cooperation.

### 5.3. Experiences from partner country and programme level

#### *Few experiences from partner country implementation*

Results-oriented planning and learning in developing countries has been described as weak throughout the history of development cooperation. A key aspect has been the relative absence of analytical and overall performance information in any particular field. Without such information, the foundation for strategic planning and reporting is weakened. A variety of explanations have been offered - including cultural, educational, traditional and political.

For a long time, partner country experiences resembled those at the level of project cooperation. Partner country systems for performance monitoring and analysis remain weak in project-mode due to development objectives and reforms being defined (foremost) externally, and reporting being centred on project performance rather than on national or sector developments. Within this context, low levels of national demand have not helped the availability and use of quality information.

#### *Early programme experience: still focus on activity and input*

During the 1980-90s, with many development cooperation interventions moving slowly towards larger and more comprehensive programmes and policy processes (a larger part still continued to be project-based<sup>19</sup>), the full scale of this lack of information was brought to light.

One experience with the programmes of the 1990s and early 2000s is that they initially emphasised joint donor management (and harmonising procedures) before turning their attention to issues of monitoring and evaluation. (See for instance WB 2007, pp. 24-25) At the turn of the century, development reports overwhelmingly complained of a lack of information, and the need to address the issue. Not only had project mode cooperation emphasised budget, activity and output information, but the early programmes had too. One spoke of a “gap”, and that gap consisted of a lack of knowledge about “the situation on the ground”, or outcome level information in RBM terminology (EU 2002).

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<sup>19</sup> During this time different sources gave different accounts of the balance between project and programme support, but on the whole suggested project aid as the dominating source of finance. More recently, the follow-up of the Paris Declaration has indicated that in 2011 45% of all ODA was delivered through programme based approaches (PBA). Between 2005 and 2010 the proportion of PBA in the baseline group of countries (32) had risen from 42 to 48%, way clear of the target of 66%. See OECD/DAC (2011), Aid Effectiveness 2005-2010, p. 63.

## *New programme efforts during 2000: Remaining substantial challenges*

So, entering the age of the Millennium and Paris Declarations, partner countries had:

- a. weak and non-coherent information collection systems
- b. poor national demand for information and analysis
- c. weak national planning frameworks (in part because of the lack of information)

The suggested remedy, as stated in the Paris Declaration, was to align with, use, and strengthen national policy frameworks based on reliable national performance assessment frameworks. The Declaration suggested that Programme-Based Approaches would be the modality for implementing these principles. Several of such approaches have been launched during the last decade, and the programmes have been built on joint results frameworks aligned to partner country strategies.

However, the monitoring and evaluation of the Paris Declaration has shown how difficult it is to successfully strengthen national performance assessment frameworks. The World Bank concluded in 2007 that progress had been made in all their partner countries, but that substantial challenges remained. Progress is best developed in countries who have come farthest in developing their own policy frameworks (as evident through their use of second generation Poverty Reduction Strategies, according to the World Bank). And progress, in this case, is judged by increasing policy coherence (unification of the strategic framework), more rational budget priorities, and an improved policy dialogue both with and between donors and line ministries/national actors (WB 2007, pp. 14-19).

The Joint Evaluation on General Budget Support, conducted by IDD (International Development Department) and Associates finds evidence that the modality has been effective in strengthening public finance management, including planning and budgeting, in partner countries. It also concludes that results delivery – particularly service delivery in some sectors, such as health – has been more effective if supported through general budget support.

An important aspect of the challenges reported by the World Bank is frail linkages between performance assessment frameworks and sector planning and budgeting processes. Partner country planning is often described as vertical, with limited horizontal linkages between different planning units, and poor use of common information sources. Rectifying the situation has been a central theme of the Paris Declaration and its follow up. The 2011 OECD Report on Progress in Implementing the Paris Declaration 2005-2010 draws a number of conclusions regarding the efforts to strengthen results management. The overall conclusion is that of the five principles of the Declaration, this is probably where progress is least visible.

On the level of partner countries, the report concludes that the development of national performance assessment frameworks has been slow, though not insignificant. Importantly, it notes that national systems are commonly strengthened where donor/recipient partnerships favour the use of performance information in planning and reporting - which is still relatively rare. More specifically, *“the use of performance indicators that are consistent with partners’ national development strategies and reporting and monitoring frameworks remains infrequent. Some donors tend to focus on funding and activities (inputs/processes) rather than results on the ground...”* (pp. 89-90).

Observations of this nature are confirmed by continuous analyses made by the IEG. At the country level, IEG concludes that both donors and national authorities' incentives favour activity preparation and delivery (output) over monitoring and evaluation. Also, national systems development still tends to emphasise process, input, and output while disregarding outcome.<sup>20</sup>

These latest findings seem to confirm that country-level results management comes about primarily due to a strong donor influence. They also seem to confirm that earlier findings about both donor and partner management practices being focused on input and activities (rather than outcomes) may still be valid. As the case may be, performance information still appears to be underutilised in national planning and policy making.

### *Some progress on statistical systems development and transparency*

The OECD monitoring report on the Paris Declaration (2011) goes on to conclude that the development of statistical systems to supply development related information has improved, although slowly, and with considerable regional differences. In parallel, World Bank evaluations indicate that progress has been most prominent in sectors (in particular the health sector) with increasing donor financing.<sup>21</sup>

Although overall progress has been made on Paris Declaration indicator 11 - the development of transparent and monitorable performance assessment frameworks - caution is invited with regard to progress on indicator 12 on mutual accountability. The indicator on mutual accountability combines several aspects<sup>22</sup> that touch upon a national and joint ability to demonstrate the use of performance information in planning, and to communicate joint results to constituencies and the public. Here, the OECD/DAC concludes that progress, to date, has been questionable. It is reported that donors are obscuring results clarity by introducing several layers of attribution between the partner countries' and their own goal structures, and by setting up their own non-outcome oriented reporting systems instead of strengthening national systems.<sup>23</sup>

Against this background, it seems that contextual factors constrain the strengthening of partner country systems and capacities with results management. In partner countries, a traditional demand for quality information to underpin planning, policy, and dialogue is weak. The tendency of donors towards uncoordinated behaviour centred on their own reporting on budgets, activities and easy-to-measure outputs has inhibited change.

To summarise our literature review on experiences from the implementation of RBM at the donor, organisational, project, and program levels, we find that the implementation of RBM at the donor level has encountered challenges due to (1) conflicting purposes of introducing the method, (2) specific difficulties in applying the method in development cooperation as such, and (3) difficulties with regard to resources and a capacity for implementation.

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<sup>20</sup> IEG 2008, pp. 26-28.

<sup>21</sup> PARIS21 (2009a), PARIS21 at Ten – Improvements in Statistical Capacity since 1999, PARIS21, Paris.

<sup>22</sup> For a full review compare OECD/DAC (2011), *Aid Effectiveness 2005-2010; Progress in implementing the Paris Declaration*.

<sup>23</sup> See OECD/DAC (2011), *Aid Effectiveness 2005-2010; Progress in implementing the Paris Declaration*, pp. 89-91.

At the project level, we find little evidence of success in the application of different project development tools, such as the LFA. However, there are individual success stories from projects. With the new set of programmes, such as budget and programme support, the literature points to evidence of improved public financial management, planning and budgeting procedures, and to improved service delivery in some sectors. It also points to improved performance assessment systems in countries with a strong policy framework for poverty reduction.

The OECD/DAC also reports that a larger results focus has improved public support for aid, and has changed the culture of how aid programmes are managed. This is in line with the experiences preceding the Paris Declaration and the Millennium Declaration Goals – that a focus on goals and results is fundamental to improving management practices to actually fulfil development objectives. Our review of the literature, however, points to a recurring and persistent problem with how organisations apply RBM in practice. For the following chapter, we have reviewed theories that could help us to explain why the application of RBM has encountered so many difficulties.

## 6. Some theoretical explanations

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So far, we have concluded that there exist several challenges to the implementation of results-based management, and that there have also been some successes. This chapter will shortly summarise research, from different disciplines, that discusses and provides alternative ways to look at development cooperation relations, and how such relations shape decision-making processes.

### 6.1. Complexity theory

Over the past few years, many development cooperation papers and research on development issues have been grounded in complexity science or complexity theory (see for e.g. Ramalingam and Jones). In general, complexity theory is critical of the current paradigm of results management, and in particular it questions its emphasis on linear causality and accountability through top-down command and control. Complexity theory seem to posit that self-organising networks, rather than hierarchical structures, are key elements in societal change, and put a strong focus on the processes that will lead to change.

Jones (2011) has suggested another set of tools to explain complex dynamic phenomena in his paper “Taking Responsibility for Complexity – How Implementation Can Achieve Results in the Face of Complex Problems”. He promotes a greater recognition to general knowledge creation in development cooperation; a variety of sources of knowledge are needed to best form actions in a complex environment.

### 6.2. Substantialist versus relational thinking

Rosalind Eyben, a researcher at IDS and founder of the results initiative Big Push Forward has written extensively on the issue of result-based management in development cooperation. She argues that the world can either be seen from a substantialist or a relationist perspective, and that this has consequences for how results are perceived. She recognises that the present vogue of “managing for development results” is an expression of a historically dominant mode of thought in international aid – substantialism – which sees the world primarily in terms of ‘entities’ such as ‘poverty’, ‘basic needs’, ‘rights’, ‘women’ or ‘results’. In “Hiding relations: The Irony of Effective Aid”, Eyben discusses that substantialism probably continues to survive due to the perceived requirements that justify aid expenditures in terms of tackling problems that have been identified as soluble. She states that *“It would be difficult to win an election on the basis that policymaking is terribly messy and that politicians and civil servants have very little control over what happens”* (2011).

She argues that current approaches to managing-for-results assume that we are in control, and that change is predictable. She contends that the only difference between the current RBM or MfDR approach from the LFA is *“no more than a change from one substantialist discourse - ‘inputs’ - to another - ‘outputs’”*. She therefore concludes that the current RBM approach in development cooperation contains, and will encounter the same difficulties as the LFA-approach.

Another way of looking at the world and development cooperation is from a relationalist perspective – i.e. placing more value in relations and dialogue, and recognising diverse perspectives and voices when accounting for more effective aid. Eyben argues that it is essential for development cooperation practitioners to also view, and adopt a work method, from a relationalist perspective. This must be recognised as central to aid relationships, whereby power influences which ideas count and what is deemed a ‘result’. If this is done, a dialogue can commence based on the recognition that effective aid means recognising diverse perspectives and voices. In practice, she therefore argues that a donor action should consist of *relations* with selected recipient organisations - those pursuing a social change agenda compatible with the donors’ own values and mission. This view implies that the recipient organisation should not be viewed as an *instrument*, but that support should rather be provided to the organisations own efforts to make change.

In the article Eyben recognises that relational approaches do take place in practice, but they are officially ignored. She therefore promotes further support to practitioners interested in a relational approach from top-management, and networks such as the Big Push Forward.

### 6.3. Social change theory

Social change theory emphasises that more focus in development analysis should be put on the power relations in society and process. The theory also has an underlying understanding for the need to re-distribute power. According to Guijt (2010) pro-poor social change efforts require conscious action and social change; it is a collective process of conscious efforts to reduce poverty and oppression by changing underlying unequal power relationships. The theory seems to imply that improvements, for example in development projects and programmes, are driven by information and experience-based reflections, and that assessment and learning are the processes of ongoing reflection about visions, strategies, and actions that enable continual readjustment. According to Guijt, the mainstream monitoring and evaluation approaches (M&E) do not serve the type of change processes discussed here as appropriate assessment, learning, and processing requires adapting a combination of frameworks, concepts and methods in order to ensure that they address information and reflection needs, and match existing capacities. However, this does not imply that methods need to be either comprehensive or complex.

### 6.4. Cultural theory

Curtis (2004) addresses a consultant’s perspective on aid management in his article “How We Think They Think: Thought Styles in the Management of International Aid”. The article explores the idea that problems in aid administration lie in the thinking processes that emerge within policy circles, at delivery levels within aid administration, and at the interface between donor and recipient. In his article, Curtis applies the ideas of cultural theory to aid management by stating that the difficulties in aid management are caused by incompatible thought styles applied to the policy process at different organisational levels, and that *“the practical outcome is particularly problematic when parties at the delivery end of aid seek to achieve complex outcomes from simple, linear projects and programs—a habit to which some donors seem to have returned, after some years of experimentation with a more flexible and responsive process of project methodology.”*

Curtis states that it is difficult to reconcile the theories of making current aid management practices more effective while donors seek to “influence” policies of the partners. In addition, policy influence is difficult because aid is beset by misaligned ends and means – fundamentally based in unequal power relationships between donors and partners. The article is critical of the linear model proposed by results management, and refers to the origins of linear models as previously utilised in manufacturing and military campaign planning. He argues that the linear model, as such, is counterproductive to learning, and that they are opposing principles of partnership and relationships in development cooperation. He therefore suggests that any effective intervention would have to recognise and respond to the more complex relationships that underlie performance – patterns of personal influence, the power of cadre interests and interactions at the administrative/political interface.

### 6.5. Management theory difficult – but there is no other option...

Some research admits that result management, in its current practice, has failed, but that there is no other option than to learn from mistakes and continue trying.

Hatton and Schroeder (2007), in their article “Results-Based management: friend or foe?” provide an evaluator’s perspective on RBM. In the article they agree that the introduction of RBM in development cooperation has indeed been challenging and complex. However they question whether if RBM is an enemy that detracts from development work. Based on their personal experience, they claim that “*The agencies, organizations and corporations that embrace RBM typically produce strong results*”. They therefore argue that organisations should adapt and implement RBM more aggressively, meaning that there need to be consequences, such as losing the project if reporting is not based on the RBM framework, if developing country partners do not participate in all facets of project development and implementation, etc.

Robinson (2007), a fellow of Drucker, concludes in his article “The Challenge of Tyranny” that blame for current events - with a breakdown of social and political structure - is attributable to the practices of the management profession. However, he states that there is no other option than to work to improve the current management practices. He states that Drucker’s major contribution to management was that people always come first, and that management is about people and their relationships with each other. The need to organise is inherent to human nature. He has found a positive benefit in offering opportunities for enhancement in lower level management training to organisations. His contribution to the debate is therefore that there is an urgent need to promote improved coordination of management educators and trainers, based on improved analysis of training needs in relation to development aims.

In a presentation made by Barder (2011)<sup>24</sup> with the title “SIMPLIFICATION & RESULTS: How a focus on results could increase rather than reduce country ownership?” reference is made to the problems with results-based aid when used incorrectly – i.e. that there is not enough scope for learning when donors determine funding requirements in advance, that a results bureaucracy is created if separate project and programme systems are created, and that there is a reduced scope for pooling and collaboration if donors want to demonstrate the results of their own aid etc. However, he then asks

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<sup>24</sup> This presentation was made at a Conference organised by SITE and MFA in Sweden on 30th May 2011, with the title “Challenges for Aid Effectiveness”.



the question “Is result based aid really the bad guy?” and states that results measurement is hard due to imperfect information, complexity of systems, and contestable goals, but that it is necessary due to fiduciary duties, political pressures and a desire to improve. He states that “Simplification” is probably the missing principle of aid effectiveness, and that a link to results is most likely necessary, if not necessarily sufficient to bring it about.

## 6.6 Some conclusions

The differences between the theoretical approaches may not appear to be as large. They all argue for more focus on analysis of how change occurs, and that improved decision-making will require a mind-set shift. Furthermore, they all insist that results-based management has never truly been implemented as intended, and they therefore suggest a number of methods and tools to this. However, these similarities in analysis and concepts hide the fact that there are epistemological and ontological differences between the theories.

Mainstream results-based management is based on an assumption that change occurs in a linear fashion where a set of activities results in outputs, outcomes and ultimately impact. To achieve the best possible results, it is therefore important to have a solid theory of change that outlines the links in the results chain from inputs to impact. Such theories of change should ideally be developed through empirically testing hypotheses for change. This can be done via different methods such as monitoring by objective quantitative indicators, theory-based evaluations and rigorous impact evaluations.

In contrast, the complexity/social change/cultural theories do not regard change as a linear process where certain interventions and “best practices” lead to predictable results. Instead, change is seen as a dynamic and complex process where interventions and practices are shaped by contextual factors and human relationships. From this perspective, a results analysis needs to take into account a number of factors, including some that are based on perceptions rather than objectively verifiable quantitative indicators. Here, approaches such as outcome mapping, that focuses on assessing changes in the behaviour of the people with whom a development initiatives works most closely, and utilisation-focused evaluation as proposed by Michael Patton (2008), that integrates evaluation in decision making processes, are appropriate methods for analysis and informed decision making.

Hence, the theoretical perspective shapes the way change is understood (linear or complex), how projects and programmes should be designed (based on “best practices” of “what works” or on a contextual analysis involving the change agents) and thereby methods for evaluating and managing for results.

The term “results-based management” is commonly used in development cooperation for management practices that are based on linear theories of change, and associated with monitoring and evaluation practices that emphasise quantitative data. However, as we pointed out in chapter 4, when this term came into fashion in the 1990’s it was to be regarded in development cooperation as a return to the notions of Drucker, and his insistence on successful results orientation as a mind-set and a perspective on management and learning, rather than a precise set of instructions. From that perspective, concepts such as results-based management or results management could be used for a variety of practises, including approaches that are underpinned by complexity theory or social change theory.

The fact that the term “results-based management” can be used for practices underpinned by very different ontological and epistemological assumptions can cause confusion, not least when it comes to the practical implementation of results-based management.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, we have chosen to apply the term in a very wide sense in this study, thus implying that we do not regard it as a concept that describes exclusively mainstream results management practices.

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<sup>25</sup> It is also worth pointing out that different theoretical perspectives are driving and underpinning some of the most contentious current debates on results, for example the debate on the value of rigorous impact evaluations.

## 7. Current international initiatives in results management

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So far, our overview has helped us to find different theoretical explanations, and some answers, to the challenges of result based management. Similarly, the *raison d'être* for different international initiatives related to RBM could help us to understand and explain the need for support mechanisms, the recent push for the agenda, and the emerging global debate on the issue.

We have chosen to group the initiatives into the following categories:

1. Result Based Financing Initiatives – Initiatives that focus on financial incentives for the achievement of results
2. Initiatives that support developing countries
3. Initiatives that support donors
4. Global Measurement Initiatives
5. Initiatives questioning the results agenda

We will focus on how the initiatives define their own “*raison d'être*”.

### 7.1. Results Based Financing – Initiatives that focus on financial incentives for the achievement of results

Results Based Financing (RBF) initiatives are important from a result management perspective because they focus on results management in donor-recipient relations. We have analyzed some of the literature on RBF initiatives in this review due to a currently hot debate on finding the most effective financing forms in development cooperation. During the last ten years, several initiatives, focusing on using different forms of incentives to achieve objectives, have received increased attention from bilateral donors. Result Based Financing (RBF) initiatives is the generic term used for strategies that focus on a results orientation of the financing instruments in aid. Some agencies also use the term Result Based Aid (RBA).<sup>26</sup> Today, more funding is provided through these types of approaches, and they are increasingly used to support a whole sector/government plan.

The rationale for many of these approaches is that aid funding is conditioned to financing outputs or outcomes rather than inputs and processes. Such an approach is assumed to improve accountability to beneficiaries, and create incentives for efficient delivery. In practice, this means that you define beforehand exactly what you will pay for, and only release payments if these results are achieved; failure to deliver results has an *immediate* effect on funding – often irrespective of the reasons for

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<sup>26</sup> The World Bank, for example, suggests that results based aid involves a donor as the principal, and a national government as the agent, while results based financing involves a national or sub-national government body (e.g. a Ministry of Health, a district health authority) as the principal and a range of possible agents (individuals, NGOs, sub-national government). DFID uses a rather different approach in which RBA and RBF are distinguished according to their funding sources and the contracting arrangements used. Approaches involving donor funding – and where the contract is between a donor and national government – would be classified as **results based aid**. Approaches using domestic funds and where the contract is between government or sub-national entity (whether government or NGO) and the implementing partner (which could be a sub national level of government, an NGO or even an individual) would be classified as **results based financing**.

the failure to achieve the result (Pearson). However, some of the approaches, such as Poverty Reduction Budget Support (PRBS) and Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), do not enforce an immediate connection between financing and results. In for example PRBS most donors conduct analysis based on performance. This analysis is then used in dialogue, and funding is decided after that.

Many of the approaches claim to reduce transactions costs, reduce the impact of information asymmetries, and promote ownership by developing countries as the approaches are more “hands-off” than traditional input-based aid.

Some of the current initiatives/financing forms/schemes are:

| <b>Initiative/financing form/scheme</b>            | <b>Short description</b>   |
|--|--|
| <b>Global Program for Output Based Aid (GPOBA)</b> | Multi-donor partnership and trust fund established to: i) fund and facilitate the preparation of OBA projects in which payment is made to an implementing agent (usually private sector but potentially non governmental organisations, and usually in the utilities sector) for each unit of output supplied; and ii) document and disseminate lessons learned. |
| <b>Cash On Delivery Aid (CODA)</b>                 | A concept for making payments to government in return for achievement of specific results (e.g. increase in primary school enrolment).   |
| <b>Vouchers</b>                                    | Reimbursement made to accredited providers on the basis of services delivered to voucher recipients.   |
| <b>Conditional Cash Transfers</b>                  | Payment made to targeted beneficiary in return for using specified services. Heavily focused in middle income countries using domestic funds.  |
| <b>Poverty Reduction Budget Support (PRBS)</b>     | Payment made to government in return for commitment to good governance and satisfactory progress in poverty reduction. Variable or performance related tranche payments are a form of results based aid.   |
| <b>European Commission MDG Contracts</b>           | Payment made to government in return for commitment to good governance and satisfactory progress in poverty reduction. Variable tranche is a form of RBA. Schemes have been established but are new.   |
| <b>Millennium Challenge Account (MCA)</b>          | Payment made to government in return for demonstrable commitment to democracy, good governance, ‘economic freedom’ and pro-poor public services.   |

From Pearson (a modified table, here, only with description of the cross-sectoral initiatives/schemes)

Pearson differentiates between the approaches by: a) who provides the funds; b) who delivers the results; and c) how performance is measured and monitored. Also Savedoff (2011) has attempted to categorise incentive schemes into two dimensions: the agent whose behaviour the incentive seeks to change, and the specificity of the output or outcome assessment. Both come to the conclusion that there are a vast number of global initiatives that only seek to address a few results (for e.g. the Roll Back Malaria initiative that only measures outcomes and impacts related to malaria) but that many of these initiatives are not based on the principles of aid effectiveness, do not use country systems, and are not aligned to the country strategies and priorities.

What is then different between RBF and traditional aid? An answer to this question requires an analysis of the results and conditions set in the individual aid contract. Obviously, results, in some form, are part of all aid contracts – however, the main difference is that the RBF link between results and payment is more direct. Pearson (2010) states that the method is not so different from other conditional aid mechanisms where the donor sets out what it wants to be delivered, and what it is willing to pay for it. However, he claims that the style of delivering aid differs between aid as emphasised in the Paris Principles and RBF: In Paris-style aid (such as budget support) donors are more interested in rewarding *commitment* to achieve results than the actual *delivery* of results, which allows them to continue to provide support when uncontrollable factors constrain result achievement. He means that a difference also lies in the interests of promoting predictability. In Paris-style aid, the correct response to a failure to deliver results through lack of commitment would be to reduce support in *future* periods, not the *current* period. He therefore concludes that both aid-styles try to deliver results – yet they do so in a different manner.

The motives and arguments for the introduction of different RBF initiatives seem quite similar. They base their arguments on the high degree of fragmentation, multitude of uncoordinated development assistance providers, high transaction costs incurred by recipient countries in their engagements with the development assistance providers, limited ownership of partner countries, the lack of accountability between all involved stakeholders, and lack of transparency. A recent initiative, **TrAid+ mechanism**<sup>27</sup>, defined in a Working Paper from the Centre for Global Development (2011) attempts to address all key problems simultaneously. One interesting aspect of TrAid+ is that it tries to go further with the results agenda, and create a “market of global results” where investors could choose what type of projects to fund, based on results achieved. In their paper they ask *“if investors can be found for the future delivery of commodities, or for financial indices based on stock market performance, why not find investors interested in the delivery of children completing primary school, or surviving to age five?”*

Although not yet tried out in any country or programme, the **“Cash on Delivery” (COD-Aid) initiative** has generated much discussion in the media, predominantly in the US and the UK<sup>28</sup>, as well as in the greater aid community more recently. The initiative has received official support from Dfid, Sida, the

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<sup>27</sup> The mechanism aims to track results, improve coordination between actors, and improve transparency, accountability, and country ownership by creating a market for certified development outputs. The initiative suggests that separate TrAid+ Governance bodies be set up in development countries to act as a third-party stamp of approval to donors, tax payers, recipient-country governments, service providers, and beneficiaries. The basic idea is that a service provider (e.g. an NGO), willing to provide services for e.g. extension of clean water would approach the TrAid+ platform, and prepare an intervention document according to TrAid+ Guidelines. Once the intervention has been approved by the TrAid+ Governance board the intervention would be accessible online, making it easier for funders interested in purchasing certified development outputs.

<sup>28</sup> See for ex. Eyben (2011), Melameb (2011), Rosenberg (2011),

Gates Foundation, and the UK State Secretary Andrew Mitchell<sup>29</sup>. The initiative has placed the results focus as a top priority in the recent debate on development cooperation.

The COD-aid initiative has encountered a lot of support, but also criticism and questions regarding data collection concerns in partner countries, faulty indicators, the risk of no financing received if outcomes and results are not achieved, and the risks of manipulation of data, risks of promoting short term results and ignore sustainability etc. Rosenberg (2011) comments:

*Data collection is an administrative burden for a government. But let's compare it to what foreign aid programs today demand from poor-country governments: endless paperwork to satisfy the requirements of multiple donors that their money is being well-spent. The vast majority of these bureaucratic requirements bring no benefit to the poor country at all beyond that of keeping donors happy. Cash on delivery, by contrast, would dispense with all that. Instead, it would require governments to measure whether programs are working. This is a burden with tremendous benefits for a poor country.*

The COD-aid initiative really merits attention for its hands-off approach, and the intention to simplify control aspects regarding e.g. financial management. But is it feasible? It would imply that donors relinquish control of budgets, accounting, and corruption aspects, which might not be allowed under the donors' laws and regulations regarding financial management and control. Hence there is a risk that more outcome control would only add to the extensive input and output control already taking place. Furthermore, given that partner countries have very weak systems for monitoring and evaluation one should not underestimate the costs of setting up data information and validity systems. And even if investments were made in such systems, the well known problems of finding valid indicators, which could be monitored in a reliable manner, would persist.

As mentioned above there are a number of other questions raised in regard to COD-aid. For example: What happens when targets are not met? Will the countries not receive any financing at all? Is there a risk that the initiatives will only finance improvement of information systems, and third party control over the figures? Will short-term results be rewarded, whereas long-term sustainable developmental changes are disregarded?

As experience from the World Bank indicates<sup>30</sup> concerns of this type may lead donors to focus on results of which the implementing partner have sufficient control, and which are easy to measure and validate. Such an approach would re-introduce all the implementation problems which are well known in RBM, and which we have accounted for earlier in this paper: i.e. focus on what is measurable rather than what is relevant which usually leads to output-orientation rather than outcome-orientation.

Whether the RBF initiatives will have a large effect on aid remains to be seen. Rogerson (2011) from the OECD/DAC states that measurement, attribution, and perverse incentive problems generally arise with many target-driven schemes, and that tight earmarking of aid runs counter to local ownership of spending choices and channels. He does, however, praise the COD-aid initiative because its design has tried to take account of these difficulties. Others such as, Glennie (2011) critically state that RBF will be no different than other modalities in history because donors simply won't accept a hands-off approach, and that donors incentives are not in line with developmentally

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/Speeches-and-articles/2010/Placing-women-at-the-heart-of-development/>

<sup>30</sup> As reported at a session on the topic of results based aid at the High Level Forum for Aid Effectiveness in Busan.

sound decision making. Savedoff (2011) takes a more careful approach and proposes that recent approaches are positive in that they focus on incentives and how people, organisations, and countries respond to incentives - which are important in complex environments, such as development cooperation. However, he states we should not fool ourselves into believing that there are perfect designs.

To date, there seem to be very few evaluations on the effectiveness of RBF approaches. A review commissioned by Norad (2011) concluded that financial incentives seem to be effective in the short term for simple and clearly determined behaviour objectives. There is less experience as to whether financial incentives can provide longer-term changes. The report acknowledges some positive room for potential, such as increasing the overall focus on problem solving, attention to results in general, improving motivation, etc. But it also acknowledges negative effects such as RBF contribution to unintended behaviour, gaming, cherry picking (choosing patient groups that make it easier to achieve the targets), etc.

Pearson (2011) concludes that there is a need for a positive but cautious approach towards RBF initiatives. He finds good design to be essential. The approach needs to be tailored to local circumstances, and may be better suited to some settings than others; results-based approaches are unlikely to be sufficient to deliver desired results - complementary actions will usually be required. He also concludes that the case for general budget support remains strong. He states that:

*If things are not working perfectly there is often a rush to find new approaches, but it is important not to overlook existing ones. Although not universally applicable, general budget support is a form of results based aid which is results focused, tried and tested, has a sound record of achievement (although it has not always been applied to maximum effect and lessons not always applied) and is fully aligned with national systems. This is more than can be said for many of the newer approaches.*

This is also the conclusion we would like to draw in our review. Many of the new initiatives are designed to work on a project basis, and seem to disregard the complexity of results management as such. There is seldom only one solution on how to achieve the best results. When it comes to results of development cooperation it is also important to reiterate that the principles outlined in the Paris Declaration were based on decades of hard learned lessons of what works and what doesn't work. As *The Evaluation of the Paris Declaration* (2011) concludes the principles remain relevant and useful. The main problem, according to the evaluation, is thus not that we have the wrong methods for delivering effective aid to improve development outcomes, but that donors in particular do not adhere to the agreed principles and use the methods recommended. However, the evaluation also concludes that more work needs to be done regarding results and accountability mechanisms in particular.

## 7.2. Initiatives that support partner countries

During the latest decade several support initiatives focusing on improving partner countries results management systems have been taken under the OECD/DAC's Joint Venture for Managing for

Development Results and by the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank (IEG)<sup>31</sup>. These initiatives have developed a number of support manuals on how to improve Results Management practices in developing countries, such as “Ten Steps to Result Based Management” by the World Bank, “How to build M&E systems to build better Governance” by the IEG, and the “Sourcebook on Emerging Good Practice in Managing for Development Results” by the OECD/DAC. Specific Manuals have also been developed within different sectors, such as “Tracking results in agriculture and rural development – A sourcebook” by FAO and the World Bank. All of the support manuals provide examples of implementation of result based management, and tools and lessons for how to improve the practice.

As part of the Joint Venture on Managing for Development Results (later Global Partnership for MfDR), regional Communities of Practice have been set up in Asia, Latin America and Africa. Their aim is to reinforce the capacity to manage for development results through experience sharing and peer learning. They provide a forum to exchange solutions that increase evidence-based decision and policy making for effective delivery of development results. Each of them is supported through specific mechanisms, and develops different activities. Each one of the Communities of Practices has developed their own Sourcebooks.

The web-pages of the different support initiatives contain support documentation on how to improve results management in partner country contexts. It is difficult to find any external evaluations or documented research on the different programmes. The IEG-webpage contains some evaluations on implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation in countries such as Colombia, South Africa, Canada, and the U.S.

### 7.3. Initiatives that support donors

On the donor side, similar global initiatives to support donors in their results management do not exist. It seems as if reforms in donor agencies and international agencies generally take place without a lot of exchange of experiences, probably because results management reforms usually are driven within the civil service of the particular countries. However, the OECD/DAC has reviewed and provided some guidance that support donor agency reform:

- In 2000, a comparative review on donor performance in RBM was commissioned by the DAC Evaluation Network<sup>32</sup>. Many of the outcomes are summarised in chapter 3.

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<sup>31</sup> IEG provides technical assistance to member developing countries for designing and implementing effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, and for strengthening government evaluation capacities as an important part of sound governance. IEG prepares resource materials, with case studies demonstrating good or promising practices, which other countries can refer to or adapt to suit their own particular circumstances. World Bank support to strengthen M&E systems in different countries has grown substantially in the past decade. Furthermore IEG, supported by many bilateral donors, has led the International Program for Development Evaluation Training, aimed at individual training in monitoring and evaluation, for many years. They have also has taken the initiative for a program aimed at setting up a program for longer term capacity building (Regional Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR)) in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Many bi-laterals support these programmes financially.

<sup>32</sup> Conducted by Anette Binnedjikt.



- RBM has been brought up in DAC Peer Reviews of some DAC member countries (although as one of many aspects brought up in the Peer Reviews). A summary of findings from the DAC Peer Reviews was published in 2011. Some of the outcomes are summarised in chapter 3.

- The OECD/DAC has produced one guidance document on aid management in general, The “Managing Aid” report. The report provides 11 lessons on aid management; one of them on result management which states that *“Develop a stronger culture of managing for results and align incentives accordingly, but to promote, not weaken, local structures of accountability”*.

- As part of the preparations for the High Level Forum in Busan, the Global Partnership for Results has produced a *“Good Practice Principles on Result Reporting in donor agencies”*. The paper proposes a set of principles for reporting development results, as applicable to donors and other stakeholders.

- The Managing for Development Results Group has produced a guide on *“Incentives for aid effectiveness in donor agencies – Good Practice and Self-Assessment tool”*.

In sum, it appears that there are many global initiatives and support mechanisms in place to support partner countries efforts with result based management. There also exist also supporting guidance documents for donors. However, there seem to be a lack of practical guidance for donors on how to actually set up their result management systems to best adhere to development countries systems.

#### 7.4. Global measurement initiatives

Several global measurement initiatives has arisen in response to the international WHAT-goals – i.e. the Millennium Development Goals and other global goals in different sectors (such as Education For All goals) - as well as goals for aid disbursement (e.g. the 0,7% goal).

Several Quality Assurance mechanisms have arisen in response to the HOW goals, and the Paris Declaration to measure donor performance, management and policy practices. These include:

- Paris Monitoring Survey, by OECD/DAC
- Commitment to Development Index, by Centre for Global Development
- Aid Watch, by Development Today
- Quality of ODA, by Brookings Institute
- Transparency Index, by Brookings Institute
- Aid Quality and Donor Rankings, by the World Bank
- Forward Spending Plans on Aid, by OECD/DAC
- An Index of Donor Performance, by Roodman D. Centre for Global Development

Easterly (2010) states that we are probably still in the “let thousand flowers bloom” phase of aid agency monitoring literature, and discusses that this is probably so because aid agencies lack the normal feedback loops available to democratic or market actors, and thus cannot observe the dissatisfaction of voters or customers. He states that aid beneficiaries have no vote and no purchase decisions by which they could communicate dissatisfaction to aid agencies. He concludes that a variety of independent academic checks on aid agencies are therefore useful in filling the void. Knack (2010) discusses the role of these public rankings, and states that they can inspire both bilateral and multilateral donors to improve their efforts, effectiveness, and efficiency in ways that will move them up in the rankings.

According to Knack (2010), who refers to Ramankutty (2009), there is also evidence that donors do in fact pay attention to these rankings and care about public perceptions. However, Knack also notes that the donor performance as measured in the rankings is based on largely untested beliefs about best practices in aid management. Similarly Easterly (2010) concludes that there are simply no reliable impact measures available across agencies and that it is simply not possible to measure the impact of aid on beneficiaries. Therefore all of the quality rankings have to appeal to a common sense consensus that very bad performance on the indicators would make strong positive aid impact less likely.

Global quality measurement initiatives could provide the pressure to improve results management in partner countries. One of the Paris Declaration indicators measures whether countries have results oriented frameworks. However, there is currently no method for measuring whether partner country results frameworks are actually used by donors. Yet the Brookings Institute has suggested an indicator, in their Quality of ODA, for the amount of donor support that goes to countries with qualitative results-oriented frameworks.

There are also several tools that have been developed by different organisations to conduct capacity analyses of the countries result based management systems, such as the joint World bank OECD/DAC **Capacity Scanning for Managing for Results (Cap-Scan)**. Several of the bilateral and multilateral donors have their own capacity measurement tools. The performance of partner country results management systems are measured both through the Paris Indicators, by the OECD/DAC, as well as through different Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Indicators (PEFA).

None of the indicators in the rankings nor a specific capacity tool seem to have been developed to measure aspects of the quality of bilateral donor result based management systems. On the multilateral side, the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) measures the effectiveness of multilateral organisations, including their quality of results-based budgeting. From 2009 and onwards, an annual report on Multilateral Aid Report has been produced by the DAC. The report compares practices in multilateral aid performance. However, neither the reports nor the DAC Peer Reviews put much emphasis on assessment of results management of donors.

In sum, there seem to be a growing number of initiatives that measure and compare donor performance in general. However there are no instruments or tools that compare donor performance in results management, or determine if they actually use partner country results management systems. Yet several tools, and some indicators in the rankings, assess and measure partner country results management systems.

## 7.5. Initiatives questioning the agenda

In recent years, a few global initiatives have arisen as a direct response to the strong push for results.

The *3IE initiative* arose due to increasing pressure to show results from public spending. The rationale for the initiative can be found in the Centre for Global Development publication “When will we ever learn?” and its Evaluation Gap working group. In the report it was realised that there was shockingly little concrete evidence about what worked and what didn’t, and that outcome monitoring said nothing about how an agency’s programmes were affecting outcomes. The mission

of the initiative is to fund relevant policy impact evaluations, provide technical support to organisations that conduct these impact evaluations, engage with policy makers, and produce different resources and various publications.

The *Big Push Forward* is a network, in the UK with around 300 subscribed practitioners who identify and share strategies to encourage funders and implementers to experiment with and, when appropriate, adopt additional, useful approaches to impact assessment and reporting of international aid programmes and projects. The initiative organises workshops and shares publications on their web site. The network organises thematic groups for further analysis on different topics such as: reclaiming the meaning of value for money, challenging dominant discourses, collaborating with people inside aid agencies who are dissatisfied with the audit culture,. The initiative seeks to find constructive ways to conceptual and methodological advancement for assessing the impact of development aid in support of a fairer world, beyond the narrow bureaucratic protocols that assume guaranteed predictable outcomes.

There are also quite a few development blogs and virtual networks that discuss and question the agenda, such as the OXFAM blog “From Poverty to Power, a blog edited by Duncan Green”. On the blog a discussion has lately been ongoing for example on the topic of the risks of the Results agenda vs. the Risk of not having a results agenda.<sup>33</sup> In this discussion questions are raised regarding evidence on what to do in development aid, but that there seems to be a less intense focus on evaluating the successes of the results agenda, or development cooperation methods as such. The following blog post comments clearly demonstrate the different views:

*The origin of the results agenda lies in a mistrust that eats like a cancer into aid agencies' capacity to make a difference. I am not convinced the emphasis on results will solve the problem of trust. On the contrary, it risks making things worse. The results rhetoric gets exaggerated by bureaucratic systems and by those middle-level managers with little country-level experience who are forcing grantees and development partners into straitjackets that constrain them from helping transform the lives of people in poverty. (Eyben, 2011)*

*A results agenda, as long as the right results are being pursued, can help to rebalance inequalities of power and make the actions and decisions of the powerful more transparent. It helps people to know what the objectives of decision-makers are – and so to argue that they should be different, if that's the case; and also to hold people to account for their success or failure to meet those objectives. Without measurement, there can be no accountability. (Melameb, 2011)*

Another interesting blog questioning the results agenda is the “Aid on the Edge of Chaos, edited by Ben Ramalligam”<sup>34</sup>. On this blog, discussions include those on result focus, and the complexity of development cooperation. One of the recurring themes is that the results agenda – as it is being shaped and implemented by development cooperation agencies - is actually in conflict with the recommendations provided by the literature regarding the need for more flexibility and responsiveness to changing contexts in developing countries. Also Ben Ramalligam has questioned why the results agenda as such does not take this criticism into account, and has promoted that “we should demand the same results of the ‘results agenda’ as it demands of every other agenda”.

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<sup>33</sup> See the discussion by Duncan Green, Rosalind Ayben and Claire Melameb at:  
<http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?tag=results>

<sup>34</sup> <http://aidontheedge.info/>

## 7.6. Current political debate and The Busan Outcome Document:

As stated earlier, the results agenda has received a renewed focus, and was a top priority, at least among traditional donors such as the UK and Sweden, during the HLF-4 meeting in Busan.

The latest political rhetoric from the UK and Sweden has been quite clear on this. The Swedish Minister for Development Cooperation, Gunilla Carlsson, states that: *“If we cannot transparently and systematically report on how our aid budget is spent, and what is achieved in the form of results, the credibility of development cooperation itself will be undermined”*<sup>35</sup>. The UK State Secretary emphasised in his speech Results for Change that his *“number one priority is for us to start delivering the results that will change the world”*<sup>36</sup>. In the speech he very strongly declared that he believes that the new results agenda is a start of a new paradigm across the development community – a paradigm that focuses with intensity on results, that places evidence above ideology, that welcomes external scrutiny, embraces radical transparency, opens its doors to fresh ideas and to new partnerships, that injects the dynamism of the private sector into its DNA, that acts as a critical friend to its partners, and that directs aid on the basis of performance.

At the recent High Level Meeting in Busan the results agenda received a renewed push. In the Busan Outcome Document, the *Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation*, it is clearly stated that sustainable development results are the end goal for development co-operation commitment, but that development cooperation should only be seen as part of the solution; it plays a catalytic and indispensable role in supporting poverty eradication, social protection, economic growth and sustainable development. The participating actors agreed to strengthen their efforts to achieve concrete and sustainable results. In the document it is stated that this involves improved management for results, monitoring, evaluating and communicating progress, as well as scaling up our support, strengthening national capacities and leveraging diverse resources and initiatives in support of development results.

Agreements were made to develop joint risk management frameworks with providers of development cooperation, and to develop transparent, country-led and country-level results frameworks and platforms in countries where the partner initiates such approaches. The frameworks should be adopted as a common tool among all concerned actors to assess performance based on a manageable number of output and outcome indicators drawn from the development priorities and goals of the developing country. Providers of development cooperation agreed to minimise their use of additional frameworks, refraining from requesting the introduction of performance indicators that are not consistent with countries’ national development strategies. It was also agreed that the actors would jointly implement a global action plan to enhance capacity for statistics to monitor progress, evaluate impact, ensure sound results-focused public sector management, and highlight strategic issues for policy decisions. In the document it is stated that the type of global monitoring to be implemented will be agreed upon by June 2012, indicating that the previous global monitoring done through the Paris Declaration Monitoring Survey and its subsequent indicators still are to be defined.

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.naiforum.org/2011/09/taking-international-development-into-the-21st-century/>

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/Speeches-and-articles/2011/Andrew-Mitchell-on-Results-for-Change/?utm\\_&&](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/Speeches-and-articles/2011/Andrew-Mitchell-on-Results-for-Change/?utm_&&)

In the commitments, emphasis is put on the development of results frameworks in partner countries, and that these should be developed in countries that take the initiative. Development of country-owned result frameworks requires strong ownership of the process from the partner; and these frameworks will only be effective if there also is a willingness from donors to use the frameworks as the basis for their support. In fact, these types of frameworks are already in place in countries with modalities such as budget support, a modality that has moved development dialogue closer to political decision making in partner countries, but with reducing political support in donors countries due to conceived political risks involved with the modality. At the moment, when more efforts are being put into finding new mechanisms and actors through which development cooperation can be channelled, harmonisation around the partner country's processes and result frameworks become even more important.

However, the political discourse in Busan and in development cooperation at moment is perhaps the clash between traditional donors and traditional ways of implementing development cooperation, and new actors and new ways of providing support to development such as South-South cooperation. In Busan this potential conflict shaped the discussion on the outcome document. In the end all actors, including new emerging donors such as China and India, endorsed the guiding principles for aid effectiveness that were outlined in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. However, paragraph 2 of the documents includes a clause that states that *"the principles, commitments and actions agreed in the outcome document in Busan shall be the reference for South-South partners on a voluntary basis"*.

In sum, when one analyses the initiatives that have arisen during the last decade the following pattern emerge:

1. Different financing forms and incentives that lead to best development results are being explored.
2. There are many initiatives supporting partner countries' and their management practices. There are also multiple supportive tools that clarify best practices and offer "how to"-guidance to develop results-oriented Monitoring and Evaluation systems etc. at in partner countries. These "how to"-guides seem to be less prominent on the donor side.
3. Several global quality measurement initiatives have arisen the latest few years, many of them comparing donor performance. More initiatives continue to arise, but at the same time, the discussion prior to Busan seems to indicate a tiredness of global measurements.
4. 3 IE, Regional Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR), PARIS21 and the Big Push Forward are examples of initiatives that have followed as a reaction to result management implementation practices. These initiatives demonstrate that a lot of forces are pushing to improve partner country results management and statistical systems. The driving force behind the initiatives comes from donors, who have a strong pressure to demonstrate results in their programmes.

## 8. Recommendations and lessons provided in the reports

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All of the literature reviewed in Chapter 5 provides recommendations and lessons. In addition, there are several source and “How to-guides” that provide recommendations, and best practice principles on how to go forward (IEG, MfDR, Mayne). In this chapter, we have tried to capture and categorise the different recommendations and lessons from the reports.

In the literature “lessons”, “best practices”, “recommended practices”, or “recommendations” are provided. Best practices or lessons are most frequently provided at a principal level. Many of the lessons and recommendations relate directly to the shortcomings raised in the reports. Therefore, it seems as if there are insufficient experiences with aspects and reforms that have succeeded in practice in an organisation. In this chapter we will thus highlight some of the general recommendations on how one should *think* and thereafter, in bullet points, demonstrate some of the recommendations on how one should *act* to change current faulty practices. Most of the recommendations is derived from literature on donors.

### *Strong leadership and “buy-in” throughout the organisation*

The most frequent lesson in the different reviews is the need for support for RBM from top leadership, and a “buy-in” of the system at all levels within the organisation. Without strong advocacy from senior managers, results based management systems are unlikely to be institutionalised either broadly or effectively within an agency (Binnedjikt). The UNDP evaluation, for example, states that *“The first and overarching recommendation addresses the need to capitalize on what has been achieved to date and establish a stronger culture of results. The success of this is not dependent upon tools and systems, but leadership and direction”*.

Several critics have pointed out that RBM is not primarily a matter of technical skills (DAC, UN), but a question on organisational culture. In building such a culture all of the reviews emphasise the importance of leadership requesting results information – “what is measured gets done. At the same time, another general lesson is that without a “buy-in” by project/programme management and partners, the performance data is unlikely to be used in operational decision making. Imposed top-down systems may lack relevance to actual project/programme management, may not sufficiently capture the diversity of results, and may even lead to programme distortions as managers attempt to achieve what is measurable, rather than what is relevant. Hence, some operational level flexibility is needed for defining, measuring, reporting, and using results data that will be appropriate to the specific project/programme, and to its country setting. (Binnedjikt) In conclusion, field managers need both leadership and autonomy if they are going to manage-for-results.

How is this done in practice? Some of the recommended actions for fostering stronger RBM-leadership and a “buy-in” throughout the organisation are:

- Build knowledge, competence and understanding of RBM through training of top leadership. Ensure that top management visibly leads and demonstrates the value of RBM by

consistently communicating and asking questions based on results information. They should be clear about the value and need for results information, and maintain how it is used to improve management.

- Support managers that are experimenting with new approaches, and respect managerial freedom.
- Provide occasions where managers can demonstrate their successful results-based management practices, and display the accomplishments of those programmes.
- Foster and support peer RBM champions, and organise events for peer pressure.
- Support resources for RBM for training and acquisition of RBM expertise, and enable a central unit to provide RBM support to managers and staff.

### *Base the donor system on national priorities and ownership*

All reviews and evaluations recommend a stronger focus on the partner relationship, and the need to base a donor results system on partners' system/s and priorities. The MfDR source book is perhaps most explicit on this principle. A key recommendation is therefore to focus the dialogue on results for partner countries – at all phases of implementation – from strategic planning to completion and beyond. Both the UNDP-evaluation and the multilateral review conclude that it is of the utmost importance to work with RBM within the context of partner country policy and fiscal environments. The multilateral review concludes that: *“Attempts to implement RBM within Multilateral Development Institutes alone, or within developing countries but without a supportive policy and fiscal environment, are unlikely to succeed.”*

Furthermore, the issue of ownership by partner countries is raised as a prerequisite. The MfDR sourcebook states that *“the programs in which the greatest problems arose in the results aspects tended to be those with poor ownership – the donors had played too strong a role in defining the program for the partner countries. Implementing agencies in the countries felt that they were not sufficiently vested in the program and were not responsible for shaping the outcomes.”* OECD/DAC has, in several of its documents, stated that a focus on results and relinquishment of ownership to partners requires a shift in mind-set. In the MfDR-sourcebook, CiDA provides examples of staff, who, they declare, were trained under the assumption of bilateral control - e.g. that Canadian companies or organisations would be hired to directly implement projects and initiatives, with far more emphasis on process than results. They state as an experience that *“the old mindset of bilateral control lives on; but it needs to be replaced – in practice as well as theory – with principles of partnership, accountability, and trust”*.

Some reviews recommend actions in order to increase ownership by partners and a shift in mindset. These recommendations include:

- Actually using the partner country systems.
- Training to augment pre-existing mind-sets.
- Taking some calculated risks that imply partner trust.
- Using participatory processes that involve partners, beneficiaries, and stakeholders in all phases of results-based management – e.g., in strategic planning exercises, in developing performance measurement systems, and in results-based decision-making processes.

### *Clarity and simplicity in the results reporting systems*

Several of the reports highlight the importance of having a policy framework that supports result reporting systems, and clearness regarding the extent and limitations of the RBM-system. Several reviews clearly recommend rules and regulations for planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation where results information is to be used. Another commonly cited lesson is an emphasis on the clarity on roles and responsibilities in regard to how data should be collected, analysed and used. Many reports mention that the user-friendliness of the system, and the RBM-system itself, should be regularly reviewed and updated. An important aspect of use, is that the RBM system is not too complicated. The following actions are recommended for increasing clarity and simplicity:

- Begin with simple systems and use the information for dialogue to improve the process. Proceed gradually and with modesty.
- Do not just add on, but clarify which old procedures and requirements can be dropped, or provide adequate additional resources.
- Set out reasonable expectations for RBM.
- Allow sufficient time and resources.

Finally, in the MfdR Sourcebook Canadian Cida underscores the importance that funding cannot be managed merely with respect to the achievement of targets. Longer-term goals and potential impact must be articulated, and dialogue on changes and the process is important for program implementation.

### *Ensure usage and foster a culture of results*

All reports refer to the lesson of ensuring that performance information is not used just for reporting, but for management learning, improved analysis, and decision-making. Some of the reviews (Binnedjikt, Multi) connect this lesson with the tension between reporting and management learning, and therefore recommend that agencies try to balance their different needs.

Most reports address the importance of the need to improve the use of data. Some note that results-based management needs to be clearly correlated with results-based budgeting. The Multi-review states that *“Resources and recognition needs to flow to those individuals, units, sectors and countries with the best record of managing for, and delivering, results.”* Some recommendations to increase usage include:

- Begin with pilot efforts to demonstrate effective RBM practices.
- Give managers the autonomy to manage for results, while also holding them accountable.
- Have rewards for groups as well as individuals.
- Provide a variety of support mechanisms.
- Encourage learning through experience.
- Anticipate and avoid misuses of performance measurement systems. (E.g. dishonest reporting, concentration on those activities that are most easily measured, holding managers accountable for results beyond their control.)

In sum, many of lessons and recommendations point to the fact that RBM cannot succeed without leadership, resources, incentives, clear and simple support systems and a shared understanding of the purpose of RBM – i.e. that results information should be used for improved decision making and learning.



## 9. Conclusions

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The desire to achieve results in development cooperation has always been part of the aid agenda, and various methods and approaches have been implemented to achieve this end. During the 1970s and 80s, results management was applied to project aid through methods such as the Logical Framework Approach. Experience and evidence preceding the Paris Declaration (2005) indicates that a fragmented aid landscape, with donors working on their own projects, did not lead to sustained development results; there was an emerging need for donors to change their methods of thinking and working. Joint global goals on WHAT to do and HOW to achieve the ultimate objective of development cooperation, i.e. poverty reduction, were agreed upon via the Millennium Development Goals and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Results management became an integral part of this development. During the 1990s, it transformed from being project-specific to a more organisation- and programme-wide level. During the 2000s, a results focus has increasingly moved towards including organisations and systems in partner countries.

The basic idea behind the results agenda – i.e. that we need performance information to understand and adapt to development contexts and to make informed choices – seems uncontested. However, even the shallow review of studies cited in this paper refers to severe difficulties with agenda implementation across different organisations, and in different contexts within development cooperation. The reviews and evaluations we have analysed generally refer to these as implementation problems, and provide a number of recommendations for how to overcome these challenges. It is evident that differences in approaches are grounded in competing world views (or contrasting epistemological and ontological assumptions). The theoretical perspective shapes the way change is understood (linear or complex), how projects and programmes should be designed (based on “best practices” of “what works” or on a contextual analysis involving the change agents), and thereby methods for evaluating and managing for results. However, we believe it is important to also look underneath the surface, at the theoretical perspective behind the tools and methods.

In this review we have studied reviews and evaluations that analyse how mainstream results-based management theory has been implemented. We have found indications that enhanced results focus and results management have led to improved policy coherence and planning, particularly in larger partner-led programmes. Some studies also indicate that a results focus at the programme and project level has improved national monitoring systems, and that the strength of the monitoring system is positively correlated with higher project outcome ratings. At the donor level, the OECD/DAC suggests that an increased results focus has helped to broaden the support for aid, and has helped to drive a cultural change regarding how programmes are managed.

At the same time, the literature points to a wide variety of results management models, along with corresponding difficulties with their application and use. The difficulties can be found at all levels, but perhaps the most severe challenges are found at the donor institutional level. These include troubles with: (i) aggregating data, (ii) measuring outcomes and impact in the short term, (iii) selecting appropriate indicators to measure relevant outcomes, and (iv) attributing results to aid-funded projects and programmes. Organisations report that results management has often been introduced

as an add-on to other management reforms and policies, implying that systems overextend and complicate their administrative and human resources. Also, it is reported that performance information is not used for the purposes intended by results management - improved analysis, planning and decision-making - but is instead mechanically used for accountability and control purposes.

On the whole, implementing the results agenda in development cooperation has proved difficult. This seems to be because:

### **1. Results-based management is complex to handle at organisational and human level**

It is repeatedly reported that the results management perspective, in its more holistic form results-based management, is ambitious. One is asking mostly non-results-oriented organisations to institute large measures of change in planning, reporting, and implementation. When introduced at an organisational level, there seems to be a tendency to interpret the results perspective as mechanistic and deterministic, in contrast with analytic and responsive-to-change notions. The review suggests that organisations often fail to make out workable results oriented models, or even put performance information to use as intended by results management.

### **2. Different purposes create conflicts in application**

Uncertainty in the development community about what results management means and is used for is likely to stem from a variety of motivations and objectives. A diversity of objectives includes disbursement levels, accountability (domestic as well as mutual), control, and planning and learning. For aid agencies, there is a conflict in the dual objective of supporting partner country result management systems while simultaneously improving their own. The representation of “results-oriented practices”, in this context, has become ambiguous.

### **3. Results management goes against management practices centred on control and process**

It appears that when the results perspective confronts management practices centred on control and/or process, managers are inclined to look away from the outcome level, and turn their attention to what is easily measurable (normally indicators found on the levels of input-activity-output). Specifically, it seems that the call for a results focus on “outcomes” has contributed to risk-averse behaviour by donor agencies. The challenge of introducing “new” management perspectives also seem to be aggravated in partner countries, where the agenda is at times seen as driven by donor country governments, and with low demand in partner countries.

### **4. The systemic and cultural demands put on development partners**

Working with monitoring and evaluation in environments where information is scarce, and national demand for performance information to influence policy and decision-making is weak, presents natural challenges for results orientation and mutual accountability. It is also evident that donors face difficulties in simultaneously *strengthening* and *aligning* with development partner systems for planning and performance assessment.

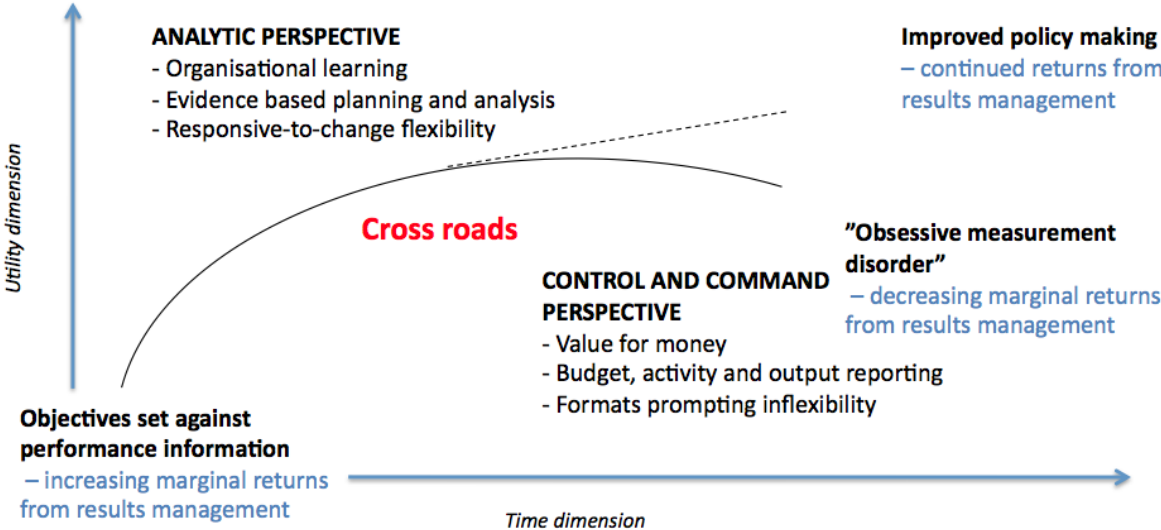
On these grounds, among others, the results agenda has been questioned to the point of suggesting that the entire idea is flawed. It may be that basic notions lead to misuse on a level surpassing any potential benefits, and that it is beyond our reach to increase aid effectiveness. However, that reasoning requires an alternative. From our somewhat limited vantage point, suggested remedies tend to rely on the notions of improved analysis and learning from past experiences.

Assuming that the basic idea of an analytic, performance-oriented perspective on management is valid, the question that follows is: how to activate it? And with regard to development cooperation: is it possible to implement the agenda successfully this time?

Today the agenda is being pushed stronger than ever. There is an increased global and domestic demand to demonstrate the results of development cooperation. The effects of traditional forms of development cooperation are being questioned publicly. New modalities and actors are entering the scene and thus, the complexity, number of actors, and ways of doing business, has never been greater. Results requirements are increasingly being used as a condition for funding: “without results - no funding and no collaboration”.

Obviously, and as this review indicates, the demonstration of results and effects of development cooperation is complex and difficult. Excessive faith that results-based management and its control aspects can solve this complexity seems to be counterproductive.

The following image could demonstrate this reasoning:



In this image, from left to right, marginal utility from results management increases where policy and programmes are based on clear objectives, thus confirming that a certain focus on results is necessary.

Experience infers that at a certain point, however, complexity and differing interpretations blur the picture. At this point, various choices are available.

Applying results management for control and command purposes seems to lead towards a mechanistic interpretation and use of results management tools. This appears to be the current situation as reported upon by the various evaluations and reviews of donor agencies – i.e. the control agenda has taken over and led to what for example Natsios calls “obsessive measurement disorder”.

The alternative might be to use results management for learning or analytic purposes. In this scenario, performance information is used to achieve a better foundation for policy and decision-making (which has seldom been the case today, according to various reviews). This approach could either be based on the same theoretical assumptions that underpin the current mainstream paradigm of results-based management, or be grounded on another theoretical foundation, as offered by late modern schools such as complexity theory. In the first case, rigorous impact evaluations (as offered by 3ie) and improved systems for systematic organisational learning would be suitable tools. In the second case, more process-oriented approaches to learning and decision making would need to be adopted, such as participatory utilisation-focused evaluation or outcome mapping.

Assuming that RBM is not a model but rather a perspective on management, the introduction of more nuance in its application – susceptible to various objectives, alternative ways of analysis and lessons learned from previous application – perhaps presents ways forward. Our final word is therefore to keep sight of the need for sound analyses to guide development cooperation, and to explore how results-oriented perspectives can be developed to find a workable approach. Results can be achieved by creating trust, learning from each other, dialogue, and human relations. Such values are probably better promoted if the results agenda can be made to work for them.

## Annex 1. Some suggestions for further research

1. *Country level studies and studies on cost-effectiveness of the results agenda.* Cost effectiveness and value for money are usually presented as key principles for results management. Results information is collected and disseminated in order to increase cost effectiveness and value for money. However, our review indicates that less emphasis has been put on discussions about the cost-implications of the results agenda as such. Data collection and verification systems are normally costly. Several of the recommendations from the reports recommend increased staff and increased capacity for data collection, support mechanisms, analysis capacity, etc. Also, it seems that resources for control and evaluation have increased in many donor agencies. However, several of the efforts seem to be put on the donor side. In partner countries, fragmentation and separate results management systems still seem to be common. There are a few examples (besides budget support and programme-based approaches) where donors have jointly come together to support result measurement systems in partner countries, and where they at the same time have reduced their own administrations. Therefore, we suggest more research of how results-based management has been applied by partner countries, including cost-effectiveness aspects of applying the agenda.
2. *How the results-based management model has been understood and applied in different organisations and contexts.* Different organisations have understood and applied the model differently. Few comparative research and studies are available on the actual understanding and application of the model. Questions arise regarding if certain “models” could be viewed as more effective than others, and whether results management actually leads to increasing aid effectiveness or increased achievement of results.
3. *The results agenda in the new aid architecture –Traditional aid versus aid provided by new donors’ and actors’.* Conditionalities on results are mainly being pushed by traditional/Western donors, while traditional aid is being publicly questioned. If results (as formulated by the donors) are not achieved –could this be the blind alley for traditional aid? How do the new donors view results and act for increasing results of their development cooperation? What kind of effects can be demonstrated from different results-based financing initiatives? Are they more effective in achieving results than traditional aid?
4. *How do aid managers deal with the multiple accountabilities that form part of the results agenda, and how does the results agenda affect the behaviour of organisations funded by development cooperation.* If all evaluations show that results information is not used for the purpose of decision-making, what is it that aid managers are basing their decisions on? And, how do aid managers interpret what they are doing, how their management practices form part of the results chain and what they seek to achieve?

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