

Chapter 6

Managing Bilateral ODA

DAC member countries finance development co-operation programmes in several ways, through budget appropriations, funds provided through sub-national authorities, civil society organisations and debt relief grants. This means that it is important for those responsible for the different kinds of bilateral aid to work closely with those who report development-related expenditures so that all bilateral ODA is included. Another concern with bilateral aid is that much of it is allocated annually, which is hard to reconcile with the long-term nature of development co-operation. DAC member countries need to consolidate aid budgets and plan development aid over the medium term. If aid flows to partner countries are predictable they can plan to make the investments required to achieve the MDGs.

Financing development co-operation

Budget appropriations

DAC member countries primarily fund foreign assistance programmes through annual budget appropriations passed by parliament, in general one to three months before the beginning of the financial year. Once parliament has approved the budget, resources are allocated to the spending authorities (government departments, aid agencies or embassies). These budgets have the force of law and are sometimes used to define the main features of the programme. Normally they are broad enough to allow governments, the minister responsible and senior officials some flexibility in adjusting allocations to changing circumstances or unforeseen events, such as emergencies and humanitarian crises. However, in some countries, parliaments are more precise in specifying geographic allocations, levels of aid for particular countries or regions, or particular uses. This more prescriptive approach may reduce the efficiency and effectiveness of foreign assistance programmes as it forces aid managers to adjust existing programmes and allocate resources to comply with the requirements set by parliament.

Some aid, such as the forgiveness of non-performing loans, does not require a transfer of funds and so does not need to be appropriated. Other expenditures classified as ODA that may not be made or managed by the development agency/ministry of foreign affairs include sustenance costs for refugees during their first year in a donor country or costs incurred by armed forces when carrying out development-related activities. Other financing, such as from sub-national authorities (*e.g.* regions, districts, provinces and municipalities), may also supplement appropriated funds, as discussed below.

Canada's International Assistance Envelope

Canada's international assistance resources, both ODA and other official assistance, are co-managed within the International Assistance Envelope by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Department of Finance. As well as a financial structure, the International Assistance Envelope is a policy tool to enable ministers to work together to determine international assistance priorities, make broad funding decisions, and "review how various programmes and expenditures combine to create a Canadian response to global challenges". The Envelope decentralises management to federal departments via five funding and programming pools, with relevant ministers acting as pool managers. CIDA manages most of the Envelope and was allocated the largest share of planned aid resources in 2007-08 (68%). Other allocations went to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (11.2%), the Department of Finance (8.6%), the International Development Research Centre (3.3%) and other government departments (1.2%), with 7.7% reserved for contingencies and sudden emergencies such as natural or man-made disasters.

Even when a single ministry or development agency in a DAC member country is responsible for managing most of the foreign assistance programme, as in Canada (see above), appropriations for foreign assistance expenditures may be managed by other ministries. In DAC member countries where several ministries implement foreign assistance activities, there may be no integrated aid budget as each ministry funds aid-related activities from its own regular budget allocation. This practice undermines the coherence of the aid system, complicates monitoring and reporting of development-related expenditures and increases transaction costs for both the donor and the partner country concerned.

Sub-national authorities

The contribution of sub-national authorities to DAC member countries' foreign assistance can be important. This form of assistance, referred to as decentralised co-operation or twinning, is most developed in Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain. In France, Italy and Spain, sub-national authorities are guided by national legislation, or a policy established by the national development agency. Rarely is decentralised co-operation guided by a strategic framework at sub-national level, except in Belgium where the Francophone and Flemish regions have each developed such a framework. An integrated strategic approach in the donor country, consistent with partner countries' priorities for development co-operation, facilitates the implementation of the principles of the Paris Declaration and should be encouraged.

The involvement of sub-national authorities in foreign assistance activities raises the overall level of a country's aid, makes it easier for citizens to engage in development-related activities, and promotes greater public awareness and understanding of development issues. The twinning of similar institutions, for example municipalities, can favour exchange, as part of long-term relationships, of specialisations, competencies and skills. However, some sub-national authorities may not have sufficient staff or professional

Box 6.1. Attitudes to co-ordination in Andalusia

In 2003, the government of Andalusia passed a *Law of International Co-operation for Development* to clarify the policy objectives, planning, instruments, organisational competencies, resources and participation of Andalusian society in co-operation. The Andalusian Agency for International Co-operation implements the co-operation policy and collaborates in formulating Spain's Master Plan. The Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity (FAMSI) co-ordinates local administrations and collaborating organisations in the region.

Although the Andalusian Agency for International Co-operation recognises the need to collaborate with the Spanish Agency for International Development, Andalusia still maintains separate offices in priority countries. To ensure that all Spanish aid is consistent with aid effectiveness principles, the DAC Peer Review recommended that these offices should be located in the Spanish Agency for International Development's country office. While FAMSI is willing to co-ordinate more with state actors, participating organisations are resisting. They want to preserve the Spanish experience of decentralisation and strong participation of citizens in development. Thus the challenge for Spain is to improve coherence and co-ordination in the overall aid system without undermining the independence of local actors and their relationships with developing countries.

expertise and, if there is no strategic framework, activities may be scattered or duplicate each other. Where they exist, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms can be comparatively weak and reporting on activities can be poorly organised.

Governments are working on reforms to improve the performance of sub-national authorities as donors. The reforms include establishing databases to collect information on sub-national development activities, identifying good practice in development co-operation for sub-national authorities, and developing common tools for monitoring and evaluation. Sub-national authorities may resist implementing the principles of aid effectiveness, as in Spain (Box 6.1), but developing appropriate tools for them to use and sensitising them to the importance of the Paris commitments can help overcome this resistance.

Aid predictability and disbursement

One persistent issue in managing foreign assistance funds is how to reconcile the long-term nature of development co-operation, which calls for multi-year planning, with the normal practice of approving aid appropriations year by year. Meeting the ambitious aid targets which DAC member countries have set for themselves in order to achieve the MDGs implies medium-term planning. This means that the predictability of aid flows in the medium term must improve to enable finance ministers in partner countries to plan and make the investments required to achieve the MDGs.

In at least half of the DAC member countries, ODA budget proposals for parliamentary approval generally include a forward looking, three- to four-year indicative spending plan or expenditure scenario. In some cases (*e.g.* Switzerland) parliament endorses a multi-year budget, although such endorsement does not guarantee funds in subsequent years and payments can be authorised only from approved annual budgets. The same applies to members who have set a target for their ODA/GNI ratio. The budget proposal links ODA to GNI forecasts, but funding is subject to parliamentary approval year by year. As a result, aid managers in some countries are under considerable pressure to commit and disburse funds within the budget period, which, unfortunately, puts the emphasis on the financial inputs to development rather than the actual outcomes and results.

However, DAC members are working to remove impediments to providing plans for future spending, so that additional aid can be used to the best effect and in line with the principles of the Paris Declaration. This will go a long way towards repairing what might be called an information failure in the aid system, which inhibits medium-term planning for scaling up development in poor countries of the world.

Another issue, related to the predictability and appropriation of funds, is the disbursement of funds. Problems with disbursement can delay development activities significantly or make them impossible to implement. For example, managers may find it difficult to recruit staff, legal and administrative approval may be slow in coming through, technical problems may arise or complex procurement systems may lengthen the disbursement process. Donors may also make political decisions in response to major changes in partner countries, for example delaying or cancelling general budget support payments or contributions to sector programmes, or cancelling all government-to-government activities. Another problem, which the European Commission (EC) has encountered, is that pipelines of committed but unspent funds can accumulate. Pipeline analysis can help agencies identify generic issues that are contributing to the

accumulation of unspent funds and to find ways to carry funds forward or redirect them to other activities.

Managing aid in partner countries

DAC members involve headquarters, embassies and development agencies in planning assistance programmes for partner countries. Most donors also involve the partner country government in bilateral consultations when preparing country strategies and some involve other local actors as well. Donors may also provide one to four year financial forecasts. The United Kingdom, for example, usually has three-year financing timeframes but has signed ten-year partnership agreements with Afghanistan, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. Donors are also considering adjusting disbursement plans to schedules and formats better suited to partner countries' needs, and disbursing general budget support in the first six months of their financial year.

Donors' strategic frameworks for engaging in priority partner countries usually set out the need and rationale for interventions and outline the operations (sectors and modalities). Annual country plans set out projects and programmes to be implemented during the year. The extent to which donors share information with partner countries varies. Some sign co-operation agreements that indicate future funding levels, while others only share such information on an informal, non-binding basis. Yet other donors do not share such information at all, or only share it with selected recipients, or in relation to budget support. Luxembourg, for example, provides five-year financial envelopes for indicative co-operation programmes. Similarly, EC country strategy papers cover a medium-term timeframe of five or six years, even though multiple financing instruments, complex and lengthy approval processes in Brussels and disbursement delays are likely to cause unpredictable aid flows to partner countries.

Aid delivery

DAC member countries commonly mix a variety of modalities and instruments to deliver aid to partner countries. The mix depends on, among other things: i) the size of the development co-operation programme in the partner country; ii) the history and type of actors involved (*e.g.* public, private or civil society organisation); and iii) the local context, including the extent to which the partner country is able to co-ordinate and manage aid in a transparent and efficient way. Most members allocate aid to partner countries through a variety of funding mechanisms, including NGO co-financing schemes, humanitarian assistance and funding for specific purposes, such as gender, HIV/AIDS, governance, the environment, or fragile and conflict situations.

The DAC Working Party on Statistics has agreed a new classification of aid modalities and instruments which will take effect in 2011. This classification applies to both bilateral ODA (grants, equities, loans) and multilateral ODA and will make reporting aid and making comparisons across DAC members easier. The classification covers:

1. general budget support and sector budget support;
2. core contributions and pooled programmes and funds;
3. project-type interventions;
4. experts and other technical assistance;
5. scholarships and student costs in donor countries;

6. debt relief;
7. administrative costs not included elsewhere; and
8. other in-donor expenditures.

Civil society organisations

All DAC member countries provide development assistance funds to CSOs, either to support their development-related activities or to implement activities on behalf of development agencies.¹ Most of the funds go to national non-government organisations (NGOs), but some DAC member countries also fund other types of CSOs.² Between 2005 and 2006, 5.2% of total bilateral ODA from all DAC member countries went to or through NGOs, ranging from 0.4% to 19.5% for individual donors (OECD, 2007, p.181).

DAC member countries recognise that NGOs often have a high profile both at home and abroad. Sometimes the public is much more aware of NGO activities than those of government development agencies. The work that NGOs do in development education is particularly important for raising public awareness of development issues. Partnerships with local NGOs and community-based organisations enable donors to reach out to otherwise inaccessible regions and excluded communities, and to deliver humanitarian assistance. This is because NGOs tend to work effectively with highly vulnerable groups and because their staff in partner countries is largely local. In situations where donors are obliged to suspend their own development assistance operations, working through NGOs is often the only option.

While CSOs in developed countries can be strong development partners, they are also an important source of aid funds. The OECD-DAC estimates that CSOs channelled USD 20-25 billion to developing country partners in 2006, compared to official flows of about USD 104 billion. CSOs also channel about 10% of official flows. In partner countries, CSOs from the South are significant recipients of aid. This means that aid effectiveness is not only the business of donors and governments but is also the business of CSOs.

CSOs offer official donors operational alternatives. In particular, they are skilled in mobilising grassroots communities and poor or marginalised people. They play an important role in monitoring donor and government policies and practices, and in putting forward policy options. CSOs also deliver services and programmes, and build coalitions and networks to co-ordinate civil society and enhance its impact. CSOs in developed countries partner with developing country CSOs to mobilise and leverage developed country resources. In partner countries, CSOs are fundamental to democratic rule and good governance as they draw attention to issues that might otherwise be ignored and provide a voice for citizens to express concerns on political, social and economic issues. Through this democratic participation and discourse CSOs complement other ways of holding governments accountable.

Working with NGOs

Some donors finance large numbers of NGOs while others limit funding to the larger or more formal NGOs. Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Spain, among others, have clear-cut criteria for working with NGOs. Where donors work with annual budget commitments, NGOs, whose development activities are inevitably long term, have to deal with funding uncertainties. Recognising the difficulties this creates for NGOs and, as part of an increasingly strategic approach, some donors provide multi-year funding for

large and well-established NGOs (see example below). In addition, NGOs may be able to access funding for specific issues, such as for humanitarian assistance, reproductive health or governance. Many of these schemes operate on a co-financing basis, where the NGO also provides funds from other, usually charitable, sources. However, some DAC member countries are limiting the number of different funding schemes to reduce management costs and increase efficiency.

Framework agreements for NGOs in Ireland and Spain

Irish Aid has introduced innovative funding mechanisms and structured its relationship with five large Irish NGOs. The multi-annual programme schemes (MAPS) provide strategic programme support to organisations with a proven capacity to operate on a clear policy foundation. Agencies receiving funding are expected to establish strong partnerships with southern civil society organisations. The southern partners are expected to influence priorities and programme design and, over time, come to own and play a more significant role in programme implementation. MAPS partners are also encouraged to co-ordinate among themselves and with Irish Aid, particularly when they are working in the same country. Learning mechanisms, such as joint learning forums, joint research initiatives and country-level MAPS partner meetings, contribute to coherence. Through MAPS, development assistance is delivered to a wide range of sectors in more than 40 countries.

Spain's framework to fund NGOs includes co-operation agreements and projects. The framework seeks to bring NGO activities into line with the overarching objectives of Spanish policy, framed by the MDGs. Projects are assigned in response to a centralised call for tenders based on the parameters set by the Spanish 2005-2008 Master Plan, further specified by country and sector strategies. The funds are managed and disbursed from headquarters, while field staff assess bids and do the co-ordination and follow-up. Only qualified NGOs may be considered for funding and award of tenders considers their capacity for technical monitoring, evaluation and impact analysis. Conventions with NGOs are limited to agreements between NGOs and the Spanish Agency for International Development.

Most DAC member countries do not apply the geographical priorities of the government development programme to NGOs. This means government programmes may support interventions in non-priority countries, even though this conflicts with attempts to focus aid and reduces synergies between NGO activities and bilateral government-to-government programmes. To prevent this, some countries are encouraging NGOs to focus activities in programme countries, such as by developing formal criteria for funding NGOs and increasing funding for NGO activities in partner countries.

Civil society organisations and aid effectiveness

By virtue of their position as independent development actors, and because they share the commitment to aid and development effectiveness, CSOs' views on the Paris Declaration deserve to be heard and considered.³ The Accra Action Agenda does recognise the importance of CSOs and advocates a deeper engagement with them. The Agenda invites CSOs to reflect on how they can apply the Paris Declaration principles to improve development effectiveness, and encourages Governments to work with them to provide an enabling environment that maximises their contributions.

CSOs are important interlocutors in discussions on aid effectiveness because of their multifaceted role. As well as being development and democratic actors in their own right, they contribute to more inclusive development processes, advocate for the interests and human rights of their constituencies, and generate public policy options. CSOs need to play this multifaceted role effectively, advocating for the public good, helping to promote accountability for results, and bringing to bear a richer, deeper understanding of the aid effectiveness agenda, particularly on issues such as political legitimacy, human rights and social justice. CSOs' effectiveness as donors, recipients and partners is intrinsically linked to their effectiveness as development actors and as change agents. It is therefore critical to include them in international institutions and processes where aid effectiveness is discussed.

Notes

1. CSOs serve as channels for an estimated 20% of ODA.
2. In general, the term CSO includes all non-market and non-state organisations in which people organise themselves to pursue shared objectives and ideals and covers a broad range of organisations. Examples include non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, environmental groups, women's groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organisations, labour unions, co-operatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes, universities and the not-for-profit media.
3. See, for example, the position paper produced by the International Civil Society Steering Group for the Accra High Level Forum, "Will aid become more accountable and effective? A critical approach to the aid effectiveness agenda".

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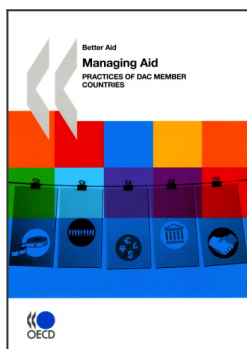
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Acronyms

AECI*	Spanish Agency for International Co-operation
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Practice in Humanitarian Action
AMC	Advanced Market Commitment
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BMZ*	Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (Germany)
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CICID*	Inter Ministerial Committee for International Co-operation and Development (France)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEReC	DAC Evaluation Resource Centre
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Office
EDF	European Development Fund
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
GTZ*	(German) Agency for Technical Co-operation
JICA	Japan International Co-operation Agency
MAPS	Multi-annual programme schemes (Ireland)
MCA	Millennium Challenge Account (United States)
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation (United States)
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGOs	Non-government organisations
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
ODA	Official development assistance
ODE	Office of Development Effectiveness (Australia)
OECC	Overseas Economic Co-operation Council
PCU	Policy Coherence Unit
PRISM	Performance Reporting Information System for Management
RBM	Results-based management
SADEV	Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation

* Denotes acronym in original language.



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