

Chapter 6: Results management and accountability of Poland's development co-operation

Results-based management system

Indicator: A results-based management system is in place to assess performance on the basis of development priorities, objectives and systems of partner countries

Poland is taking steps to plan for results and monitor results indicators through its projects. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) could take its results-based management system a step further by promoting an institutional culture that values and learns from results and making stronger links between programme and project results. Poland would also benefit from a more coherent overview of how its total bilateral and multilateral co-operation activities contribute to the development co-operation objectives set out in the 2011 Development Cooperation Act. As it works towards strengthening the results focus of its development co-operation, Poland can learn from the experiences of other providers on results chains, aligning with partner country's results frameworks and using results for decision making.

Poland is taking steps to develop a systematic approach to managing for development results. It needs a more coherent view of its development goals

The MFA is strengthening the results focus of Polish development co-operation. Initial steps in the right direction include:

- setting out broad development results in the focus areas for its priority countries and territories in the 2016 Development Cooperation Plan (MFA, 2015b)
- introducing expected results and measurement indicators for some of its priority countries and territories in the Development Cooperation Plan¹
- requiring logical frameworks and the use of results indicators in calls for proposals for projects to be financed by Polish aid.

These steps will allow the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to test its approach, reflect and learn from its own experience, and ultimately build an institutional culture that focuses on development results. Now that the ministry identifies expected results in the development co-operation plan and project logframes use results indicators, the next step could be to make clearer links between the various levels of results, focusing on outputs and outcomes. Evaluations which aggregate results at sectoral or country level can help Poland to define what it can achieve with its interventions. The MFA could also consider reducing the number of existing measurement indicators it is using for projects and standardising them across the programme. By building staff awareness and capacity in managing for results it can strengthen the results focus of its development co-operation.

In light of the high share of multilateral aid, scholarships and credit lines in its total ODA, Poland would benefit from developing a coherent view on how the results of its bilateral and multilateral interventions as a whole can contribute to the democracy and social economic development objectives laid out in the 2011 Development Cooperation

Act (GOVPL, 2011). Building a results-management system requires time and commitment from managers, staff and implementing partners. As Poland builds a results culture and puts in place a system, it can also learn from the experiences of other providers with results chains, aligning with partner country's results frameworks and using results for decision making.

Monitoring is based more on financial control than on development results

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs monitors projects financed through calls for proposals during monitoring missions (that should cover at least 50% of the projects) carried out at the end of the year and through the analysis of reports received from implementing partners. Embassies help monitor these projects and are directly involved in monitoring the small grant scheme.

The results that are to be monitored are included in the logical framework that the MFA now requires for each project and financial agreement. However, project monitoring is based less on development results than on controlling financial and operational activities (by analysing receipts) to decide whether the total grant amount can be disbursed before the end of the year. Since Poland finances one-year projects, monitoring findings are not used to correct existing development interventions. Instead they are used to select new projects in the next call for proposals.

There is no specific approach to monitoring results in fragile states

Poland does not have a specific approach towards monitoring the conflict sensitivity of its programmes and projects in fragile states.

Evaluation system

Indicator: The evaluation system is in line with the DAC evaluation principles

Poland has made progress in putting in place a system for evaluating development co-operation, including a dedicated post, annual evaluation plans and budgets. A dedicated evaluation policy would improve transparency, promote accountability and strengthen the role of evaluation in assuring the quality of Polish development interventions. Evaluations should be impartial and be managed independently from policy and programming.

Poland could reinforce the role and added value of evaluation by having a clear statement on its purpose, coverage and independence

The 2011 Development Cooperation Act asks the MFA to “evaluate the effectiveness of implemented development co-operation goals set out in the [Multiannual Development Cooperation] Programme” (GOVPL, 2011). In 2012 an evaluation unit (called “Independent post for evaluation”) was created in the Department of Development Cooperation, staffed with a senior expert advisor. The unit is responsible for evaluation procedures, including drafting the evaluation plan; selecting external evaluators through tenders; and following up on evaluation findings. Between 2012 and 2015, the unit has commissioned and followed up 11 thematic evaluation studies, aggregating about 200 projects by themes/initiatives and geographical areas and covering a period of one to four years.

The Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme dedicates a chapter to evaluation and monitoring, describing the key objectives of evaluation; the types of evaluations to be conducted (ex-post evaluations of projects and programmes and mid-term review of the

programme); the role of the evaluation plan in setting out the evaluation process; the principles and criteria to be used for evaluation; and specifying that evaluations will be carried out by independent external entities (MFA, 2015a). While this is useful, Poland would benefit from a specific evaluation policy defining the role and responsibilities of evaluation within the Polish aid system. This should include its role in evaluating aid components not included under the Multiannual Development Cooperation Programme (e.g. credit lines and scholarships), set out the institutional arrangements to ensure independence of evaluation, and clarify how the system will learn from evaluation. This would improve transparency and strengthen the role of evaluation in providing a basis for accountability and in assuring the quality of Polish development interventions.

Poland should ensure evaluation is independent from policy and programming

Poland tries to ensure the independence and impartiality of individual evaluation studies by commissioning independent consultants selected through a tender procedure.² However, the independence of the whole evaluation process could be affected by the influence that the management of the department can have on the choice of activities to be included in the evaluation plan.³ There is a possible conflict of interest between policy, programming and evaluation. As Poland continues to institutionalise evaluation, it should review and identify how to guarantee the overall independence of the evaluation function.

Poland plans and budgets strategically for evaluating development activities

Through its annual evaluation plans, available in English on the Polish Aid website,⁴ Poland ensures a strategic selection and coverage of thematic and geographical areas to be evaluated, describing the scope of the studies, their timeline, their rationale and the total planned cost. The plans are prepared by the evaluation unit of the MFA, which prioritises the future importance that specific topics will have for the Department of Development Cooperation. Plans are approved by the Undersecretary of State for Development. The resources allocated through the special reserve of the MFA in the 2016 Development Cooperation Plan also include a specific budget for evaluation activities (MFA, 2015b).

Involving aid beneficiaries in evaluation activities is a challenge

Involving the beneficiaries of Polish aid in evaluations would increase transparency and reinforce mutual learning and accountability. Poland recognises that, as for many Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members, involving beneficiaries is a challenge, especially given the small size and relatively stand-alone nature of its individual bilateral activities (Chapter 3). Although Polish embassies are informed of the results of evaluations, Poland could increase stakeholder dialogue and involvement for instance by sharing draft terms of reference through the embassies, presenting the preliminary findings of evaluations in partner countries and inviting representatives to stakeholders' meetings in Warsaw when evaluation results are presented (see next section).

Institutional learning

Indicator: Evaluations and appropriate knowledge management systems are used as management tools

Poland is learning from its evaluations to improve the quality and relevance of its development interventions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs could capitalise on the existing knowledge available within the Polish system by promoting a culture of learning among its staff and sharing knowledge with all the actors involved in development co-operation.

Poland ensures follow up and use of its evaluation findings

The Department of Development Cooperation within the MFA ensures the systematic and transparent dissemination of evaluation results. It publishes them on the ministry's website in Polish and English, and organises annual meetings to present and discuss the results with the Council of Development Cooperation and staff, with side events open to the broader public (e.g. NGOs).

To ensure it learns from evaluations, the department organises special meetings with evaluators, management and staff to discuss all recommendations. Managers sign a special protocol to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the evaluation findings and recommendations. The evaluation unit is in charge of systematising and aggregating the findings of evaluations, dispatching recommendations within the department and following up on their implementation.⁵ According to the evaluation unit, recommendations are usually implemented.⁶ The department should continue promoting a culture of learning from evaluations, including by promoting greater ownership of the findings, in order to improve policy and practice in development co-operation.

Improving knowledge use within the Polish system would enhance development quality

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has an internal searchable information technology system (Diplopedia), accessible also by embassies, which stores all project proposals, logical frameworks, project reports, evaluation reports and recommendations. In 2015, the ministry took steps to improve internal communication between planners and implementers of development co-operation projects by grouping these functions into territorial teams (MFA, 2016). The MFA could play a co-ordinating role and promote a culture of learning to ensure that knowledge available within the Polish aid system is used by all relevant actors to improve development interventions (including other central and local government authorities and NGOs).

Communication, accountability and development awareness

Indicator: The member communicates development results transparently and honestly

Since joining the DAC in 2013, Poland has been increasing transparency. It plans to create a more practical system for collecting, processing and reporting statistical data in the near future. An important priority is to raise public awareness of the interdependencies between countries and of the existence and need for the development co-operation programme. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is strategic in building public awareness through communication and global education, working with key partners such as the Ministry of Education and NGOs. As Poland gathers information on results it will be able to step up efforts to communicate successes and challenges while continuing to increase transparency.

Poland is taking steps to increase transparency

Since joining the DAC in 2013, Poland has been increasing the transparency of its development co-operation. Poland's reporting to the DAC Creditor Reporting System (CRS) has improved and it started reporting against gender and environment markers in 2013. Poland also publishes the results of its calls for proposals in the Public Information Bulletin and in the joint government database on public expenditures.⁷ However, in 2014, the Aid Transparency Index "Publish What You Fund" still rated Poland's transparency as "very poor".⁸ Since the current information technology (IT) system limits what Poland can report, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs plans to create a new system for collecting, processing and reporting of statistical data to implement the common standard for the electronic publication of timely, comprehensive and forward-looking information.

Clear communication of the results achieved can increase public support

Raising public awareness and maintaining a high level of public support for the Polish development co-operation programme are important goals for Poland (MFA, 2015a). Increasing public support is essential to gain political backing for development co-operation, especially since Poland is a relatively new donor. Since 2004, the Public Communication Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (staffed with seven people) has monitored public support to development co-operation through annual opinion polls.⁹ This unit has a good communication strategy, involving a variety of means including the Polish Aid and the ministry's websites (which both have an English version), annual reports, brochures, social media (Twitter, YouTube), and TV and radio broadcasts.¹⁰

The Public Communication unit has also developed an online repository containing basic information and narratives on the results of development co-operation projects financed by Polish aid.¹¹ This is a good first step. Experience from other DAC members has found that effective public engagement requires clear and coherent messages that go beyond isolated events, facts or statistics to communicate progress over the long-term (OECD, 2013). Poland's emerging system for monitoring and aggregating the results of its bilateral interventions provides an opportunity to develop a clearer and more coherent narrative on the overall results of its development co-operation, including successes and challenges.

Poland is working in global education

Global education is an important priority for Poland, and is one of the objectives of the Development Cooperation Act (GOVPL, 2011). Poland's Global Education programme aims to make global education more present at all levels of formal education; raise public awareness of global interdependencies; enhance the quality of educational initiatives on global education; and ensure coherence between global education in Poland and abroad (MFA, 2015a).

Through a partnership involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Zagranica Group,¹² Poland is working to raise public awareness, enhance the competence of teachers and educators in global education and incorporate development issues into school curricula. Global education activities are financed through the annual MFA's Global Education call for proposals.¹³

A 2013 study was commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to evaluate 17 global education projects in 2010-12. It found that while the projects contributed to a change in participants' attitudes and provided practical and useful knowledge which could be used by schools, they did not result in a structural change of the education system, calling for a more in-depth and systematic co-operation between the MFA and the Ministry of National Education (EGO s.c, 2013). Poland should continue to support and strengthen co-operation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Polish NGOs to reinforce and increase awareness and understanding of development issues as a basis for public and political support to its development co-operation programme.

Notes

1. Annexes I and II of the 2016 Development Cooperation Plan include expected results and proposed measurement indicators for Polish support to internally displaced persons (IDP) in Ukraine and for aid activities in Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia and Senegal (MFA, 2015b). According to MFA staff, the choice of results (which are not quantified, but defined with measurable indicators) is based on past outcomes from NGOs projects and partially from partner countries' strategies.
2. According to interviews carried out in Warsaw by the peer review team, DDC managers do not influence the choice of the evaluation team.
3. The evaluation unit, which reports to the Deputy Director responsible also for the Unit for EU Development Policy and Multilateral Cooperation and for the Humanitarian Aid Section, prepares the proposal for the annual evaluation plan. The plan is discussed by deputy directors of the Department of Development Cooperation and approved by the Undersecretary of State for Development.
4. Polish Aid website dedicates a page to evaluation with annual plans, evaluation results and reports at www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/Evaluation,2033.html#plan.
5. The evaluation unit produces a table of the evaluation findings and allocating recommendations to specific units within the DDC. It also records how many times the recommendations have to be applied, by whom, when and how. The table is approved by the management of the Department of Development Cooperation and the senior evaluator checks twice a year if the recommendations have been implemented and discusses implementation with management.
6. During peer review meetings in Warsaw, the senior evaluator gave the team some examples of how recommendations have been applied: new technologies have been included in the new Global Education calls for proposals (2013 recommendation); the Scholarship Programme for Specialised Eastern Studies at the Centre for East European Studies in Warsaw has been improved (2014 recommendation); and certain criteria and considerations have to be checked before financing democracy support projects in Moldova through the Solidarity Fund.
7. Data provided to the joint governmental database on public expenditures provided by the MFA can be found under the provider "MSZ" here (in Polish): <https://danepubliczne.gov.pl/en/organization?sort=&q=&page=2>. The Public Information Bulletin (also in Polish) can be found at www.msz.gov.pl/en/ministry/public_information_bulletin/.
8. Details of the scoring can be found at <http://ati.publishwhatyoufund.org/2014/donor/poland/>.
9. According to the last poll carried out in December 2015, 65% of the Polish population believe that Poland should support the development of less developed countries. However, public support has been decreasing in recent years (it has fallen from 84% in 2008 to 74% in 2012 and 71% in 2014; MFA, 2016).
10. For instance, on the occasion of the European Year of Development, the MFA organised a global education event which was broadcast on public television.
11. The repository can be found at www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/Repository_of_projects,1945.html.
12. These three bodies signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2011 on the Development of Global Education in Poland in order to further strengthen the capacity of the governmental institutions and their non-governmental partners involved in global education, and to provide a joint platform for structured dialogue and strategic planning (MFA, 2016).
13. This financing amounted to PLN 2.7 million (USD 0.72 million) in the 2016 Development Cooperation Plan (MFA, 2015b).

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