



FOUNDATION FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDY AND RESEARCH

The technocratic trivialisation of aid

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Working paper
"Development policies" series/P16-Fra
March 2011

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Alongside the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI), it implements the Initiative for Development and Global Governance (IDGM in French).

Developmental thought is like fashion. Like clothing, it is trend-dependent. Attempting to keep step with mysterious deviations and confusing twists and turns in the policies of so-called “rich” countries towards “poor” countries can be an exhausting process.

It would appear that no-one is able to handle the multiplicity of donors or the abundance and complexity of the themes that make up a development policy any more.

We have moved from the funding of investments and technical assistance to consideration of sectoral issues, then to macroeconomic reform, supplemented by cross-cutting themes such as issues relating to gender, environment, good governance and decent work. On a given day, production and the economic dimension of development are the flavour of the hour, only to be replaced the next by the human and social dimension, followed by a return to objectives for growth and investment. Discussions cover the political dimension of development, conflict prevention, migratory flows, security and peacekeeping operations. The seesawing impact of developmental thinking – yet another trending effect – on the primacy of government in the development process (“get the prices right”, then “get the institutions right”) adds to the complexity of development and to the worrying observation that the certainties, ideas and doctrines of today become the errors and mistakes of tomorrow.

Such has been the case with regard to the unrelenting question of aid effectiveness and the debate generated around this subject for the last thirty years. The initial watchword was “coordination”, a concept that evolved towards “complementarity” and “harmonisation”, until its rewording in the mid-1990s around the idea of “aid effectiveness”, moulded and reinforced by a series of high level forums, notably the Paris 2005 meeting leading to the adoption of the Paris Declaration and the Ghana 2008 forum, where the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) was defined.

In late 2011, the international community will convene in Busan (South Korea) for a new high-level forum on aid effectiveness. Calls have already been made, particularly among civil society, for the concept of aid effectiveness to be replaced by that of “development effectiveness”. There is currently no shared understanding of “development effectiveness” at international level. Indeed, some see no difference between the two concepts.

The objective here is not to engage in a comparative analysis of the two concepts and their operational implications, but rather to question the underlying reasons leading to the abandonment of an agenda that has engendered countless research papers, reports and decisions, most of which have yet to be implemented, to be replaced by a new one. Is this merely a new trend? A means of achieving visibility? An admission of failure, perhaps?

From Monterrey to Accra: a commendable and structured rhetoric

Addressing aid effectiveness is an absolute necessity. Such an agenda aims to improve the quality of the implementation, management and use of official development assistance to maximise its impact, particularly in terms of growth and poverty reduction. What could be more commendable in a context of increasing public uncertainty about the legitimacy of official development assistance or, in the case of some authors and researchers, its relevance in a rapidly and radically changing world?

The concept of effectiveness was developed following the adoption in September 2000 of the Millennium Development Goals, with their target date of 2015.¹

Commitments to increase official development assistance made by donors at the Monterrey conference (2002), renewed at the Doha conference (2008), and confirmed and reinforced by the decisions of the G8 and the European Union (the leading global donor) made this requirement for effectiveness all the more appropriate.

After a first international conference held in Rome in February 2003 and a round table in Marrakech in February 2004, a milestone was reached in the quest for effectiveness in March 2005 with the adoption of the Paris Declaration. Signed by 35 donor countries, 26 multilateral organisations and 56 recipient countries, the Paris Declaration is founded on 5 core principles:

- ownership: recipient countries set their own strategies and development priorities, and coordinate the interventions of their donor partners;
- alignment: donor interventions are founded on and aligned behind national development strategies, institutions and systems of recipient countries;
- harmonisation: donors must coordinate and harmonise their actions, make them more transparent and simplify procedures;
- results-based management: resource management and implementation must be focused on the result of each funded action and on anticipated results;
- mutual accountability: donors and recipient countries are accountable in terms of public opinion and government for results obtained and must ensure transparency in the management and use of development resources.

Such principles appear so self-evident and marked with common sense that one might wonder why it took so much time and so much discussion across many fora, round tables and other meetings to record them in an official document.

¹ This is the concept of aid effectiveness in the general sense used by the OECD Development Assistance Committee. In fact, the concept of aid effectiveness had already been used for a long time by economists in the specialist literature (*Editor's note*).

The five principles were broken down into 12 measurable global indicator targets for 2010, concerning both partner countries (importance of operational development strategies and reliable procurement and public finance management systems) and donors (alignment, partner capacity-building, aid flow predictability, gradual removal of parallel project management units, use of country systems, etc.).

OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) carried out two surveys on monitoring the implementation of the Paris Declaration in 2006² and 2008³, revealing some progress. However, on the admission of DAC itself, this progress was clearly insufficient and too slow.

It is clear that the Paris Declaration is in its infancy: attempts are made here and there, experiments are carried out, and tools are tested. And Europe is without doubt the most dynamic and innovative player in this regard, as illustrated, for example, by the European Code of Conduct on Complementarity and the Division of Labour, adopted in May 2007.

However, we are still far, far wide of the mark. Building on the two monitoring surveys, a high level forum was held in Accra in September 2008 with the aim of accelerating and strengthening the implementation of the Paris Declaration. An agenda for action was agreed (AAA) identifying 48 new commitments, including strengthening use of country systems, changing the nature of conditionality, establishing efficient division of labour, increasing aid predictability, reducing the fragmentation of aid, "untying" aid, and strengthening transparency, among others.

A new monitoring survey is in progress, the findings of which will be revealed later this year and will inform discussions at the high level forum to be held in Busan in November 2011.

This summary of how the aid effectiveness agenda has developed demonstrates how, after many meetings, research studies, papers, commitments and declarations, an unprecedented policy framework now stands as a blueprint for action, to put an end to rhetoric and take action. We cannot simply content ourselves with referring to the magic words of the Paris or Accra principles. Paris and Accra are not ends in themselves. We must take action to change the reality of the situation in the field.

Ultimately, it is a matter of political will. The question lies in ascertaining whether this will exists and whether the abundant literature and political commitments undertaken to implement the agenda for aid effectiveness are being materialised in terms of real action in the field.

² 2006 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration

³ 2008 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration

Kafka: the return

The list of high level events that have included a discussion of aid effectiveness issues – Monterrey, Rome, Marrakech, Paris and Accra – is impressive.

Nice places, nice words, nice ideas! But what is really happening in the field?

On the ground, donors continue to engage the time and energy of ministers and their administrations for their individual missions. They arrive at different times, disconnected from country agendas. Last year, there were 752 donor missions⁴ (two each day) to Vietnam, of which only 130 were coordinated. How can a country's authorities carry out their work – that is, defining and implementing their policy – if they are monopolised by donor missions and responding to their demands?

Donors continue to demand various conditionalities and require more and more indicators. They talk about results, but do not allow the policy and fiscal space a government needs to implement its policy to achieve those results. They do not give partner countries the predictability they require to define their development strategies.

Each year, Tanzania must produce 2,400 reports for its 40 donors. There are currently 600 projects with budgets of under USD 1 million in progress in the health sector alone.⁵

In Kenya, in 2008, 20 donors were scrambling to purchase medicines, and they were doing so through 13 different procurement agencies.⁶

In addition, for some years we have seen a proliferation of vertical funds. There is a sense that once a problem arises, the response is to create a vertical fund. Some of these funds doubtless have real added value, but they must be considered on a case-by-case basis. The uncontrolled proliferation of these funds creates additional disorder within the international aid architecture, undermines ownership by recipient countries of their development strategies and results ultimately in the veritable trivialisation of official development assistance.

All of this makes no sense at all and constitutes a real nightmare for recipient countries. There is no doubt that in some areas some progress has been made. But this remains very modest and well below the expectations of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda.

These findings clearly illustrate that exceptional, brilliant and even convincing rhetoric may be constructed to salve one's conscience, but that this actually conceals self-interested behaviours. They demonstrate above all that, in spite of apparent political will, the donor community is unprepared for the profound changes required by the implementation of the aid effectiveness agenda.

⁴ Source: OECD DAC Database.

⁵ Source: Internal European Commission Study (2008).

⁶ Source: Internal European Commission Study (2008).

The examples that follow regarding the implementation of some of the basic principles of the AAA on ownership, conditionality, alignment and the division of labour illustrate the gap that exists between rhetoric and action.

Ownership: a mere façade

The commitment brought by donors to the key concept of ownership in the aid effectiveness agenda is very often mere rhetoric. I have frequently heard the saying across the Atlantic that “the country must be in the driving seat”. A noble thought. Except that most times ours is a car with no steering wheel, no pedals, and remote control-driven from Washington...

Some years ago, poor countries drew up Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) under pressure from the Bretton Woods Institutions. Drafting these documents represented a significant administrative burden for the countries in question but was embraced, insomuch as the PRSPs were an essential gateway to debt cancellation transactions. Once the debt was processed, the papers were not only kept, but their content reinforced. They constitute the national poverty reduction strategy for each country, around which the policies and actions of the various donors should be articulated, under the principle of ownership.

This is far from being the case. Donors continue to develop their own policy instruments and to demand different conditionalities, in the belief that a country’s own policy will run the risk of not producing the desired results. This is then no longer a matter of ownership, but of “informed” ownership (informed by donors, naturally).

Ownership is not only a matter of anchoring cooperation strategies and actions to the national strategies of the countries concerned. Ownership means reducing the level of detail required of the governments of those countries. Ownership means allowing the countries in question the necessary space to define their policy priorities and the way they mobilise their resources, rather than deciding on their behalf how many teachers or nurses will be recruited or how many kilometres of road will be repaired.

Donors must learn to work with documents prepared and produced at country level and which, I add, must be made official at national level through the processes of civil society consultation and parliament participation. Today, donors tend to comment on any areas where they consider there to be, in their view, weaknesses in those documents. Of course, it is not an option to accept any old document. A certain level of reassurance is required. However, at the same time, a certain level of humility would be welcomed. Donors do not possess the truth. They have been wrong in the past. No doubt they will still make mistakes from time to time in the future.

In the closed field of competition between aid donors, the poorest countries remain susceptible – often because they have no choice – to inspirations, doctrines and advice with which they are not comfortable. But they are increasingly fazed by the variety – and by the contradiction, even – of these doctrines, inspirations and recommendations, which in fact

conceal just as many conditionalities. They are fazed and worried because, in many cases, doctrine equates to orders, and advice translates into rules.

Herein lies the problem of the negative correlation between ownership and conditionality.

Conditionality or contract?

There is extensive economic literature and ongoing debate about the principle of conditionality, its practice and necessary evolution.

The underlying concept is that of making aid conditional upon the implementation of a series of macroeconomic and sectoral reforms ensuring a sound development policy, which the countries in question, in the spirit of holders of the conditionality, are not capable of doing alone.

It was in the framework of the structural adjustment policies of the 1980s and the Washington Consensus that this approach reached its zenith.

Many calls were made among partner countries, donors, civil society and academic circles criticising this practice of conditionality, which negates the very principle of ownership. How can the founding principle of the Accra Agenda for Action on the responsibility of governments to define their strategies and priorities be respected if those strategies and priorities are driven by donor-imposed policy elements?

Conditionality was a key moment in the Accra meeting, under pressure from partner countries in particular, civil society and the European Union, which had established in Brussels, at ministerial level, a common and ambitious position, from which it has never wavered.

Europe's position on conditionality was twofold:

- reform, simplify and harmonise the definition and implementation of conditionality;
- abandon an approach based around unilaterally-imposed policy conditions in favour of mutual engagements formulated around a performance- and results-based approach.

These elements are incorporated in paragraph 25 of the approved AAA text. Unfortunately, this has not been followed up by action.

For my part, I have long been convinced that the word 'conditionality' should be banned from the donor vocabulary and replaced with the notion of a 'contract'. This is more than a simple change of vocabulary. It concerns a change in behaviour, culture of cooperation,

in ethic, even. Conditionality implies sanctions. Contract implies dialogue and joint commitment. The structural adjustment policies illustrated this clearly: macroeconomic reforms cannot be bought through the application of conditionality any more than a state can be reformed for better governance through sanctions.

We must put an end to this “clinical delirium” of conditionality which, out of concern for maximising its effects, leads donors to multiply conditions, making them more and more complex. This conditionality, based on economic policy instruments or indicators and defined *a priori* to enable disbursements, must be replaced by a results-based approach, based on jointly defined indicators. This is the meaning of the notion of the contract. In other words, disbursements must not be tied to the adoption on a certain date of an investment code or the privatisation of an enterprise but rather to the evolution of school enrolment rates or the reduction of infant and child mortality.

It is clear that in such an approach, partner countries are allowed the necessary room for manoeuvre to implement their own policy and achieve the objectives and results they have set, on the basis of jointly established indicators. By doing so, we avoid the sudden cut-offs observed during the application of the Washington Consensus, in the form of an all-or-nothing policy under which aid was cut – often in a purely mechanical way – when conditions were not fulfilled, then resumed several months later, only to be cut once more when other donor-imposed conditions were not met.

Under the results-based approach, aid is adjusted according to the level of results achieved. To date, only the European Commission has adopted this type of approach for budget aid disbursements to some development partners, even if the relevance of the performance indicators selected may be debated (final development indicators versus progress indicators). No other donor has given concrete content to this Accra Declaration recommendation, which invites donors to focus on a harmonised and results-based conditionality.

It is for this reason that partner countries are making the abandonment of the policy of conditionality a key point in their proposals for November’s meeting in Busan.

Alignment or dissipation?

Alignment is a central pillar of the Paris Declaration. No fewer than 7 of the 12 performance indicators are dedicated to alignment. The Accra Agenda for Action reinforces the importance attached to the concept of alignment, in particular with regard to the use of procedures and systems in partner countries.

The use of country systems lies at the heart of alignment, since it enables total alignment of external aid with a country's strategies, institutions and procedures. Its implementation remains a considerable challenge for the entire international donor community, as evidenced by the DAC monitoring survey in 2008.

While partner countries have improved the quality of public finance management (a key factor for the use of country systems), the use of these systems by donors has increased only marginally.

In fact, the alignment debate concerns the instruments used by donors: budget support versus project support. The debate has existed for decades, and each side has its advocates and critics. Of course, one could wax lyrical on the respective merits of each and demonstrate that such an instrument would be a vice and the other a virtue, and vice versa.

In reality, where conditions allow (a suitable macroeconomic context and sound public finance management), budget support is the more effective tool. Firstly, it is the best way to implement the principles of ownership and alignment and, in so doing, it significantly reduces the administrative burden for recipient countries and transaction costs. Next, it lends substance and weight to partner-donor dialogue. The relationship is by definition much stronger as soon as budget support becomes a decisive factor for the recipient's general budget. The recurrent and predictable nature of this assistance, as well as the operational capability that it represents for the partner country, are such major benefits that they create space for a much more fruitful line of discussion and dialogue on sensitive issues such as public finance, the rule of law and democracy, among others. Lastly, budget support enables funding of all costs, including operating expenses. It also enables funding of medical staff, teachers, judges, etc.

In spite of these advantages, many donors are still reluctant to move in this direction, owing to the perceived risk of misappropriation of funds, and prefer to favour a project-based approach, which is easier controlled and more visible. However, under such an approach it is the donor's own systems, procedures and monitoring and evaluation methods that are used.

Such an approach is far-removed from the many recommendations on alignment and use of country systems. In fact, not only is the majority of donor support given across projects, but significant red tape is imposed by development agency bureaucracies to adapt their internal rules and legal provisions to make it possible to use country systems for project aid.

The situation is complicated considerably by the number of development projects currently in the implementation phase, which grew from around 20,000 projects in the mid-1990s to 40,000 in the year 2000, and now stands at 100,000 today.⁷ At the same time, the financial level of these projects has significantly reduced, to an average of EUR 0.7 million to EUR 1 million per transaction (figures relate to European Union only).

The particular example of Ethiopia illustrates how far the reality is removed from aid effectiveness decisions: of the approximately 2,200 projects under way, half have a total project amount of less than USD 100,000, and they account for less than 2% of state aid received by Ethiopia.

This fragmentation of aid into many small projects funded by many donors according to their own rules and procedures is an intolerable burden for the authorities of partner countries and undermines the very concept of alignment. It is also excessively costly for donors. A European Commission-funded study in 2008 revealed the additional cost to the European Union of this fragmentation at between EUR 2 billion and EUR 3 billion each year, a figure determined on the basis of the number of new projects approved by Member States each year (22,000) and an average hypothetical cost (consultants and field staff) of formulating, investigating and approving each project of between EUR 90,000 and EUR 140,000.

Division of labour: dashed hopes

Promoting the division of labour is by no means a new objective. At European level in particular, the Council Resolutions of 1995 and 1999 already advocated greater complementarity between Member States, and between Member States and the Commission. With its introduction in the Paris Declaration and its reinforcement in the AAA, the division of labour became a key component in the aid effectiveness agenda.

The objective is to combat the excessive fragmentation of aid at global, country and sector level and, in doing so, to significantly reduce the administrative burden and transaction costs this generates for partner countries.

At European level, the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council in May 2007 gave new impetus to the debate on the division of labour. The Code of Conduct, whose application is entirely voluntary, distinguishes three levels of division of labour, as follows:

- recipient country level, where Member States are invited to limit their support to two focal sectors (not including general budget support); outside these sectors, Member States may enter into delegated cooperation arrangements, wherein a Member State acts on behalf of another/other Member State(s) for the purposes of dialogue and resource management.
- between countries, with the aim of reducing the number of priority countries for each donor, but also ensuring a better distribution between the different partner countries. The idea here is to reduce the gap that exists between “aid darlings” and “aid orphans”.

⁷ Source: AidData, March 2010.

- between sectors, the objective being to reallocate aid flows to each sector on the basis of the comparative benefits of each.

With regard to the Code's principles for implementation, emphasis is placed on affirming respect for ownership and the necessity not to reduce global aid volumes to each country due to implementation of this division of labour. To strengthen the Code, the Council decided in May 2008 to launch a fast track initiative in around thirty countries to implement the division of labour.

Of course, the Code and its fast track initiative concern the European Union only and therefore do not address the global issue of donor proliferation and aid fragmentation; however, it was appropriate that the European Union, which accounts for 55% of global aid, would start by organising between its Member States before expanding the division of labour to the entire donor community.

Here, too, many meetings, discussions and papers have resulted in ambitious and practical proposals. Some progress has been made, for example in the area of delegated cooperation, and the reduction in the number of priority countries. But very few countries have made these cuts and, in any event, they have done this without any cooperation at EU level, in contrast to the requirements of the Code.

In spite of all the efforts undertaken, progress has been much slower than expected. This is particularly true of the division of labour within countries. In some countries, there are still between 10 and 20 donors operating in the same sector, each with their own monitoring requirements and their own conditionalities.

DAC disbursement data from 2008 reveal the following situation in Ethiopia:⁸

- nine sectors were supported by 20 or more donors, including healthcare (24), governance (23), reproductive health, education and other social infrastructure (23 each), water and sanitation (20), agriculture (19) and economic infrastructure (19);
- on average, EU donors were active in nine sectors (some with marginal amounts).

This is clearly not the best way to channel aid to Ethiopia.

There are a number of explanations for this lack of progress, as follows:

- lack of ownership by partner country governments and fear of facing coalitions of donors;
- donors prefer to remain active in a wide variety of sectors, for reasons of visibility;
- lack of harmonisation of programming processes between donors and with national planning cycles;

⁸ Source: Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia study (2010).

- legal and administrative barriers on the part of donors;
- difficulties for donors to relinquish a certain influence over the policy approaches of partner countries;
- readiness of each of the parties concerned to act as coordinator but the refusal of these to be coordinated;
- tension between sovereign decisions on security or foreign policy dictating presence or absence in a particular country, and international commitments on aid effectiveness.

Conscious of these difficulties, the Council of the European Union adopted conclusions in June 2010 to improve the complementarity and coordination of the European Union and significantly reduce aid fragmentation and address the problem of aid orphans. These conclusions could have been political and prescriptive and could, for example, have brought about the mandatory application of the Code of Conduct. However, they have been purely bureaucratic: “Member States will share information on geographic concentration, country priorities [...] and will convene at an annual expert meeting to discuss the overall picture.” Bureaucratic systems still have a long way to go to give real substance to the aid effectiveness agenda.

Of course, we cannot allow ourselves to be caught up in a state of blissful optimism that obscures the challenges and difficulties of such an agenda. Some of these difficulties encountered are understandable, whether they relate to the division of labour, alignment or conditionality. But the real question we must ask is this: why do these difficulties – which undermine any significant progress in implementing the aid effectiveness agenda – appear at the implementation level of this agenda, and are not identified during preparatory work for policy-making and commitments undertaken by the international community?

There are two possible responses to this question:

- either policymakers were informed and aware of these difficulties and entered into commitments – to ease their conscience – in the knowledge that they would not respect them;
- or policy decisions were made that seemed pertinent and opportune with regard to aid proliferation and fragmentation, and it was their respective bureaucracies that jeopardised those decisions.

Whatever the answer – and I would be inclined to favour the second – the result is that the international aid architecture is no longer clear to anyone.

An increasingly complex aid architecture

As a host of new players outside the DAC “club” appear on the development scene, so the aid architecture becomes less clear and increasingly complex. Their emergence has bolstered donor proliferation and aid fragmentation, thereby undermining the objectives pursued under the aid effectiveness agenda. This is not a new phenomenon, but it has experienced an explosion in recent years.

Today, official development assistance stands at around USD 120 billion (2009). This can be mainly attributed to donors regrouped under DAC, and it is these donors who have made a number of decisions and other recommendations to ensure the effective use of these resources. However, these resources constitute only part of the financial flows to developing countries. Other players are providing an increasingly significant contribution to the development effort.

Today, there are around sixty bilateral donors (24 of whom are DAC members), twenty multilateral donors, some 230 international aid organisations, funds and programmes, not to mention the impressive number of NGOs and private foundations, the largest of which, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, earmarks some USD 3.5 billion annually to development.

These new players, in particular southern hemisphere countries (e.g. China, India and Brazil) are currently fuelling a sort of creeping revolution that is shaking up the traditional system of development aid. These countries provide aid to developing countries on their own terms and conditions, often accompanied – as is the case with charitable foundations – by private-sector-inspired modern management practices. By so doing, they offer partner countries attractive alternatives in the face of disillusionment with the established system and its unfulfilled promises, whether this relates to growth in public aid, conditionality reform, alignment on strategies and procedures of these countries, or the division of labour and coordination.

In other words, the aid effectiveness agenda has not only failed at the level of its operational implementation but also concerns only some of the actors in the field, namely traditional donors (although some emerging players have rallied behind this agenda). Other

actors – many of whom refuse to be considered donors – have opted for other approaches and other standards.

Partner countries are therefore confronted with a two-tier system:

- on the one hand, the pursuit of coordination, complementarity and alignment between traditional donors and some other parties...founded on an aid effectiveness agenda that has remained at the level of rhetoric;
- on the other, a plethora of other players, each bringing their own strategies and procedures, outside any policy framework (such as those of the Paris Declaration or the Accra Agenda for Action), from which they feel disengaged.

From Accra to Busan: policy or bureaucracy?

The signatories to the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, be they donors or partner countries, are aware of the detrimental impact of the proliferation of players and aid fragmentation. They are also conscious of the fact that the sum of measures taken to remedy this situation, however relevant, have been implemented only in a very modest way. They are also no doubt aware that these measures cover only part of the development agenda and that, beyond these signatories, many other actors are working in the development arena. They must, I imagine, be aware of the profound changes that characterise the aid architecture today, and of the limitations of official development assistance alone – even though it remains an absolute necessity – in ensuring the success of development. Are they able to draw the necessary conclusions from this to prepare the 4th high level forum on aid effectiveness?

One might well doubt this when one considers the way in which the forum is prepared. Central to forum preparations is the DAC Working Party on Aid Effectiveness. This working group, created after Paris, was restructured after the Accra meeting and has set out a new work programme based around the implementation of the commitments made in Paris and Accra, and the additional measures and action to be considered in the perspective of the Busan meeting.

The group's structure and work programme are presented in a 65-page paper. Comprising many experts, the group is structured as follows:

- Two Co-Chairs (one from the northern hemisphere, one from the southern hemisphere)
- Two Vice-Chairs
- A 26-Member Executive Committee.

- There are five thematic clusters:
 - ownership and mutual accountability
 - strengthening and use of country systems
 - promoting transparent and responsible aid
 - assessing progress made
 - results-based management.

Each cluster has 4 task teams, making 20 working groups in all.

How can we reasonably address the aid effectiveness agenda by creating a structure that is almost a caricature of bureaucracy?

It is not the quality of the participants of this group that is the issue. What is reprehensible and concerning is the fact of having created a machine churning out meetings and papers, and which is actually permanently self-sustaining, giving the impression that nothing exists outside of Accra and Paris.

Conclusion

The abundance of donors, the complexity of challenges, and an alienating bureaucracy founded on rules and proposals that are more and more numerous and less and less operational, have led to *a bureaucratic trivialisation of aid that no longer leaves space for political inspiration and indulges in a type of verbal esoterism understood only by a select few.*

In the face of official development assistance that is undergoing tremendous change, an almost dissuasive difficulty in advancing the aid effectiveness agenda, and a type of somewhat autistic “aid-centric” behaviour, the response to the proliferation of players and aid fragmentation can only be inclusive and policy-based.

The response must be first and foremost inclusive, since no-one, not even within DAC, is the sole possessor of the truth with regard to development, and it is therefore urgent and imperative to involve other actors in the debate on aid effectiveness. Paris and Accra certainly gave rise to pertinent and opportune decisions for improving aid effectiveness. But these measures have been very rarely applied; while at the same time other views coexist alongside Paris and Accra – other types of relationships with partner countries, other methods of action that do not reflect conventional thinking on aid and that must be heard, understood and taken into account.

The response must also be policy-based, since only a strong and global policy approach can shake off the red tape and make the difference. The world is changing. The aid paradigm is changing. The response to these changes can only be policy-based. If a policy response is not provided, the Busan meeting will repeat the mistakes of the past.

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