



2006 ASIAN REGIONAL FORUM ON AID EFFECTIVENESS

Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Forum Report



The World Bank Group

INTRODUCTION

THE 2006 ASIAN REGIONAL FORUM on Aid Effectiveness that the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Government of Japan, United Kingdom's Department for International Development, and the World Bank jointly organized and supported was held at the ADB Headquarters, Manila from 18 to 20 October 2006.¹ The Forum brought together representatives from 20 partner countries from the Asia and Pacific region, including several civil society representatives, and members from 30 donor agencies and countries. It reported on progress made since last year's Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness,² which provides a framework for reforming the way development assistance is delivered and managed.



Registration



FOREWORD

WE WERE VERY PLEASED to host a Regional Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Manila at ADB Headquarters. The Forum identified best practices, and noted a number of measures to enhance implementation and improve the monitoring and evaluation of the Paris Declaration. As an integral part of the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Forum facilitated this process by providing an opportunity for sharing practical experiences, identifying constraints, and recommending actions to improve aid effectiveness at the country level.

Group discussions covered the five key themes of the Paris Declaration—namely, ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for development results, and mutual accountability—and the monitoring and evaluation of aid effectiveness as overarching themes covering all principles of the Paris Declaration. All group discussions were centered on case studies from several countries in the Asia and Pacific region that were used to illustrate the problems and constraints in implementing the Paris Declaration. The Forum resulted in very frank and open discussions ranging across the challenges of implementation, the meaning and implications of the different Paris principles, and monitoring and evaluation as a cross-cutting theme. The participants proposed various measures on the ways in which the development community can work together to improve aid performance.

Mme. Khempheng Pholsena
Vice President, ADB

Ms. Charlotte Seymour-Smith
Director, Asia, DFID, UK

Mr. Reiichiro Takahashi
Deputy Director General, MOFA
Government of Japan

Mr. James W. Adams
Vice President, The World Bank

October 2006



Opening Session

“While we recognize that greater amounts of development assistance are needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, we must also appreciate the importance of more efficiently and effectively utilizing donor aid.”

— ADB Vice President Khempheng Pholsena

MOVING THE PARIS DECLARATION FORWARD IN ASIA

The Forum was an opportunity for constructive and open dialogue representing the principle of equal partnership among a wide range of development practitioners.

The Paris Declaration provides a set of principles and commitments of global application to be applied at the country level. Forum participants agreed that the Paris Declaration is relevant and important for increasing the impact of aid in reducing poverty and inequality, increasing growth, building capacity, and accelerating achievement of the MDGs across the region. However, Asia is the most diverse developing region in the world, with a vast range of country conditions and varying degrees of aid dependency. The Paris Declaration needs to be adapted to country conditions, through country-owned and led national aid-effectiveness programs developed in dialogue between partner countries and donors. The Forum recognized that many pathways lead to improved aid effectiveness, and that countries need to determine their own priorities, pace and sequencing, and aid modalities, building on their development achievement and learning from other success cases in the region.



Madame Khempheng Pholsena, ADB



Plenary Session

Asian countries are recognizing that the Paris Declaration is an instrument for changing aid practices and for advancing the contribution of development assistance to national development goals. Participants from the donor, partner country, and civil society sides strongly agreed on the need for change, based on the commitments in the Paris Declaration. Changing aid practices for better results is a major undertaking, and costs and risks are associated with the transition.

Countries vary in their level of engagement in implementing the Paris Declaration. Some countries have been systematic in organizing implementation but many others have not. While changes are under way across the region, the challenges remain substantial. The Forum helped identify constraints and challenges, including the resource implications, and successful innovations in practices that demonstrate the potential for and the value of change. While the scale of the challenges ahead, as discussed, is herculean, all sides clearly committed to sustain the momentum established at the First High-Level Forum in Rome in 2003, the Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results in Marrakech in 2004, and the Second High-Level Forum in Paris in 2005.

The Forum presented thematic and country evidence on aid effectiveness in Asia, and established the importance of evaluation and managing for development results.

Some countries have developed systematic programs for implementing the Paris Declaration, including localizing aid-effectiveness commitments,

developing national action plans, setting baselines, and introducing monitoring systems. To help base the discussion of the Paris Declaration firmly on current Asian experience, a series of 12 case studies, covering seven Asian countries and exploring the lessons learned from a range of initiatives to improve aid effectiveness, was prepared. These were compiled into five thematic reports—Ownership, Alignment, Harmonization, Harmonization in Disaster Response, and Mutual Accountability—each addressing principles under the Paris Declaration. A synthesis report was also developed to draw together the most important themes and lessons. Also presented was evidence from field experience of results management and monitoring and evaluation of aid effectiveness. These background materials formed the basis for the discussions.³ The Forum emphasized the importance of transferring the lessons learned and best practices from among these experiences and enhancing regional cooperation among partner countries as a means of encouraging greater engagement with the Paris agenda.

OWNERSHIP

The Forum strongly asserted country ownership as the foundational principle for improved aid effectiveness.

The Forum welcomed the shift away from the use of externally imposed policy conditionality, and the development of more mature development partnerships in which donors support partner countries in achieving their national development goals. The Forum also discussed three case studies related to the use of program-based approaches to help promote country ownership. These were an education sector-wide approach in India, program support for devolved social services in Pakistan, and Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC) in Viet Nam. The studies showed that program-based approaches (PBAs) in



Mr. Reiichiro Takahashi, MOFA, Japan



Thematic Discussion

support of national and sectoral development strategies and plans can help countries establish effective leadership over development assistance. Participants recognized that country ownership must extend beyond government to include parliaments and civil society. Engagement with a wide range of stakeholders is necessary to ensure country ownership. Participants also provided several positive examples of a more mature dialogue between partner countries and donors on how best to achieve national development goals; they generally agreed that such examples need to be emulated across the region.

“Weak country system(s) should not be an excuse for parallel management structures...capacity development lies at the heart of what we are trying to achieve.”

— Mr. Heng Chou, Delegate from Cambodia

The Forum recognized that stronger government capacity is a precondition for effective country leadership of the development process.

From the discussions, a more systematic approach to capacity development across all levels of government was clearly necessary. The Paris Declaration calls for reducing the reliance on project implementation units that are parallel to the country’s own systems. There was broad agreement that reliance on such parallel systems was detrimental to broader capacity development and an impediment to enhanced country ownership. More accurate, transparent, comprehensive, and timely information on aid flows and the development of

national aid databases would also facilitate stronger country leadership and the progressive integration of assistance within national development plans and budget frameworks.

One area of concern noted is weak country ownership of much technical assistance which is not necessarily demand-driven and represents a large share of aid flows. The Forum emphasized the importance of demand-driven assistance that is sensitive to the national development process in each country context. In particular, technical assistance to develop country capacity and improve country systems needs to be based on the specific requirements of each country and a comprehensive long-term approach to such assistance is necessary.

ALIGNMENT

The Forum noted the progress that has been achieved in aligning external assistance with national development strategies.

In general, both donors and partner countries felt that there has been much progress in aligning the assistance strategies of the donors with the national development strategies of the partner countries. Such alignment has been achieved through various means. On the one hand, donors have been working much more closely with partner governments in both developing and promoting more coherent strategies aligned with poverty reduction objectives and the MDGs. On the other hand, donors have been coordinating more closely among themselves to avoid duplication of effort and achieve better division of labor. In each country the principal donors have been working very closely with



Mr. Pen Thirong, Cambodia



Open Discussion

government agencies and offices to align assistance programs. While differing methods have been used across the region, there was acknowledgement that progress has been made across all countries; with a few exceptions, alignment has been largely achieved.

However, alignment with country systems has proved a much more difficult challenge.

Participants recognized that channeling assistance through strengthened country systems is the most effective way of engaging with their development. However, use of country systems to transfer and manage aid has proven to be quite challenging. While the Paris Declaration emphasizes that the use of country systems must be enhanced, it also recognizes that this can only be possible if country systems meet international fiduciary standards and norms. But donors face accountability requirements that constrain their use of country systems, as illustrated in two case studies that were presented—the reform of the public procurement system in the Philippines and financial management reform in Bangladesh. Participants discussed the problems and difficulties encountered in the use of country systems, both from the partner country and donor perspectives. The Forum noted the importance of finding ways to increase the use of country systems, while at the same time directing sustained efforts at strengthening those systems and addressing corruption. A good example of addressing both country and donor concerns simultaneously was found in the five banks’ initiative in Viet Nam.⁴

Program-based approaches have generally proved their value as an effective platform for advancing strategy and systems alignment and harmonization among donors.

PBAs encompass an approach to assistance that allows for far greater flexibility. PBAs are able to accommodate different funding modalities, provided they fit within a country-led planning framework and rely on common arrangements. PBAs offer a number of options for funding, ranging from broad budgetary support and sector-wide approaches to more focused support for specific country-owned and developed sector or thematic programs. To develop PBAs, donors need to harmonize their procedures and develop common arrangements for working with partner countries. Since PBAs rely on country systems, they also work to the advantage of partner countries by ensuring that country systems are in place or are developed to accommodate these common arrangements.

HARMONIZATION

The Forum recognized the importance of harmonization among donors at strategic, programming, and process levels.

Harmonization initiatives among groups of donors have helped initiate progress toward greater aid effectiveness in many countries. The Forum noted that harmonization should be seen as a progressive step toward alignment and effective country leadership. Participants discussed case studies of harmonization initiatives leading to better aid effectiveness from Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Indonesia. Different country contexts result in different approaches to harmonization among donor agencies. However, in all cases, the benefits in terms of more effective aid delivery were apparent.



Country Group Discussion



Ms. Christine Wallich, The World Bank, Bangladesh

The Forum also recognized that effective harmonization is critical in responding to natural disasters and conflict.

Two major natural disasters have affected countries in the region during the last 2 years, namely, the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 and the South Asian earthquake in October 2005. The Forum discussed case studies of donor responses to the tsunami in Indonesia and the earthquake in Pakistan in the context of the benefits of harmonization during emergency response. Different approaches were employed in each of these two cases—while a multi-donor trust fund was set up in Indonesia, a joint needs assessment was done in Pakistan, with various donors dividing the work required among them. Clearly, speed is essential when responding to disasters such as earthquakes, and achieving good division of labor among donors is a very effective approach to addressing the multifarious problems including reconstruction. Multi-donor trust funds, as in the case of Indonesia, have also proved a useful tool for harmonization and for strengthening mutual accountability. The Forum emphasized the need for flexibility to be able to cater to particular circumstances in response to disasters and conflicts.

The Forum acknowledged that greater aid coordination, including improving the division of labor among donors based on their comparative strengths, enhances aid effectiveness.

Greater selectivity or use of delegated cooperation helps streamline assistance and reduce transaction costs. It enables donors to engage more intensively in their areas of specialization. In particular, greater selectivity among the donors

and more strategic division of labor between them are a key factor in avoiding duplication of effort and enhancing aid effectiveness. Joint analytical work and joint strategy and programming exercises are a good way of achieving both selectivity and division of labor. The Forum noted some good examples of joint country planning and analysis initiatives from a wide range of countries in the region, which have helped improve complementarity among donors.

MANAGING FOR RESULTS

The Forum noted the importance of evaluation in supporting policy making and aid management, and ensuring that assistance remains focused on achieving development results.

A culture of evaluation needs to be developed across the region, together with substantial investments in developing evaluation capacity. Participants discussed the options of a global evaluation framework for the Paris Declaration to help partner countries assess their progress and capture emerging lessons and good practices as we move toward the next High-Level Forum in 2008 in Ghana. Case studies covering various aspects of monitoring and evaluation of aid effectiveness from several countries were presented. These included cases from Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Viet Nam . The Forum was pleased to note the partnership efforts by partner countries and donors on establishing systems to monitor aid flows and, as seen in certain cases, implementation of the Paris indicators, thus providing a foundation of usable information for better results management.

The Forum talked about efforts at strengthening managing for development results in the Philippines, including ways to manage resources and improve decision making for results. Managing for results needs to be embedded in



Roundtable Discussion



Dr. Quazi M. Ahmed, Bangladesh

the partner country's institutional culture at multiple levels. Incentives need to be provided to managers and policy makers so that the use of information related to development results is adequately fed back into the development process. Information flows are very important to disseminating good practices and increasing accountability. Participants agreed that a mechanism of more south-south learning with respect to evaluation, monitoring, and results management is also important for strengthening ongoing activities in the region as we move toward the Third Roundtable on Managing for Development Results to be held in Hanoi in February 2007.

MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

A shared commitment among partner countries and donors toward improving development results is the basis of mutual accountability.

Discussions covered the new structures emerging at the country level to support more effective and accountable development partnerships. The new development partnership requires reciprocal commitments at the country-level with mutually agreed action plans and specific targets. A more formal structure for dialogue between donors and partner countries needs to be in place and country capacity for aid coordination needs to be strengthened. Mutual accountability can be achieved through developing shared objectives and strategies, learning from good development examples from other countries in the region, greater transparency on aid flows and practices, setting baselines, and establishing joint monitoring and evaluation processes. The examples of Cambodia and Viet Nam were presented to illustrate some of the ways in which new partnerships are being structured. Both countries

have established elaborate structures for dialogue and are developing comprehensive monitoring systems. Clearly, the Paris commitments are not self-executing and both partner countries and donors need to work together to adapt the Paris agenda to the country context.

Donors need to budget adequate resources to change aid practices. Weak aid management capacity is a cause of poor aid practices which both donors and partner countries need to address. Additional constraints to mutual accountability mentioned were the lack of delegation to the country level by donors, and lack of sufficient engagement by partner countries. Effective monitoring of commitments and managing for results help sustain the momentum of, and improve, aid effectiveness. Government's first line of accountability should be to citizens, through parliaments and civil society, who should be active participants at all stages of the development process. Where they are effective, policy dialogue including consultative groups work to advance the Paris Declaration and aid effectiveness. Each partner country and donor should consider how best to respond to trends in progress on partnership commitments and indicators of progress as these emerge over time in the lead up to the next High-Level Forum in Ghana in 2008, and beyond.



Open Discussion



Minister Jone V. Navakamocea, Fiji Islands

“People and the communities at large are at the very heart of the Paris Declaration. Country systems and processes are just tools to ensure that aid flows reach and make an impact on their lives. We must always ensure that aid reaches the people and communities whilst at the same time continue to strive to improve our country systems and processes.”

— *The Honorable Jone V. Navakamocea,
Minister of State for National Planning, Fiji Islands*

MOVING FORWARD ON THE PARIS AGENDA IN THE ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION

The Forum noted a number of measures that could enhance implementation of the Paris Declaration across Asia and the Pacific. The measures advocated included suggestions for both donors and partner countries and emphasized the need for joint work and more comprehensive dialogue on all aspects of the Paris commitments.

Sustained and systematic capacity development across governments on aid management and project implementation is needed.

Capacity development needs to be sustained and systematic so as to provide the necessary means to more effective aid management. This would be assisted by better integration of project delivery structures and unified incentives around aid programs. Parallel project implementation units are an impediment to

sustainable capacity development. Thus, partner countries and donors should work together to reduce the dependence on such parallel structures while developing more comprehensive action plans to upgrade the capability of government agencies to implement projects and manage aid more effectively across the board. Capacity development should be provided to both finance and line ministries providing services to citizens. However, partner countries and donors should also ensure that civil society develops adequate capacity for it to perform an effective advocacy and accountability role.

Donors need to address a series of institutional issues to enhance their efforts to implement the Paris Declaration.

Donors have to deal more effectively with institutional constraints that hamper efforts at improving aid effectiveness and implementing the Paris Declaration. Development agencies must give greater delegation of authority to country offices to enable them to participate in a timely and efficient manner in the negotiated process of improving aid effectiveness. Providing adequate staff and resources for this purpose and creating incentives for changed practices across their organizations are also necessary. There is also a need for greater information sharing and transparency among donors and with partner countries, and more harmonization on operational policies and business processes. The Forum also expressed support for continuing to make progress on untying aid, as articulated in the Paris Declaration.



Ms. Charlotte Seymour-Smith, DFID, UK



Dr. Ho Quang Minh, Viet Nam

The Forum encouraged partner countries to take a more structured approach to implementing the Paris Declaration.

The implementation of the Paris Declaration has to be localized to suit country conditions. This requires country-level action plans covering all aspects of aid effectiveness, with country-specific objectives. Much greater use of independent or joint evaluation and mechanisms for sharing lessons and experiences among partner countries can also help support implementation. Day-to-day interactions between government and development partners underpin the implementation of the Paris Declaration. Donors should ensure that these interactions are based on a firm recognition of government leadership and be respectful of government ownership of the agenda. The Forum noted the importance of bringing emerging and nontraditional donors into the aid-effectiveness processes and dialogue. It called for greater transparency of their assistance to other partner countries and welcomed them into this joint exercise of increasing aid effectiveness.

“Learning best practices and experiences from one another including from emerging Asian donors would be the best way to nurture the learning process.”

— Dr. Ho Quang Minh, Delegate from Viet Nam

Donors need to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical assistance by ensuring that it is demand-driven and is under country leadership.

The participants generally acknowledged that the quality and effectiveness of technical assistance being provided to partner countries, including in the area of capacity development, is wanting. One of the main reasons identified for this is that the technical assistance is not always demand-driven and does not necessarily cater to the specific needs of the country. Partner countries should identify their own technical assistance needs and select appropriate assistance, and donors should better coordinate in providing this assistance. To make further progress ahead of the next high-level forum in 2008, specific examples of assistance—which were not conducive to development—and of emerging best practice should be identified. It is also necessary to ensure that all assistance be demand-driven.

Donors should explore ways of developing country systems by using them more for aid delivery.

Channeling aid through country systems can be a rapid way of delivering on a range of Paris commitments if country systems have a certain degree of reliability. The Forum agreed that country systems need to be used for more effective aid delivery where possible and that this area needs more attention. It acknowledged that donors should strive to find ways to increase the use of country systems, and move forward on systems alignment in a more comprehensive manner. More investment is necessary in developing and improving country systems, and donors and partner countries need to work together in this regard. Joint diagnostic work helps increase transparency and



Open Discussion



Prof. Ryokichi Hirono, Japan

build confidence. Donors should reassess institutional constraints on greater use of country systems, work to help capacity development strengthen these systems where needed, and explore options for more flexible and harmonized practices. Further, using country systems and combating corruption should be recognized as nonconflicting aims which can be tackled together.

Greater aid coordination, including better division of labor and selectivity within donor programs, is important for improving aid effectiveness.

Donor agencies need to coordinate their activities and assistance more effectively. Aid coordination promotes harmonization and alignment, while reducing transaction costs for both country partners and donors. Instruments such as joint country strategies can help donors identify and develop their comparative strengths. This in turn will lead to more strategic division of labor between the donors. More joint analytical work, and more joint programming and portfolio reviews need to be built into annual work programs. Further, programs need to be developed to conduct joint evaluations of aid effectiveness.

There is a need for sustained investment by partner countries and donors in developing monitoring and evaluation capacity.

Donors should harmonize and align their approaches to monitoring and evaluation and work together with partner countries who should be brought into the process at an early stage. Donors should also help capacity development of partner countries' monitoring and evaluation. Evaluation processes should also be country-driven and not tailored to donor interests alone. For mutual accountability, donors need to share information more openly and be more transparent and responsive to partner country requests on matters such as

predictability of aid. More information about results would also help promote aid effectiveness. Partner countries should make greater use of results information for policy making and management. The Hanoi Roundtable in February 2007 provides an opportunity to further develop communities of practice and regional networks across Asia.

The Forum was pleased to note the determination of partner countries to take forward subregional dialogue to advance the implementation of the Paris Declaration.

In this regard, several suggestions were made to develop mechanisms to promote dialogue between partner countries, to learn from each other's experience, and to jointly develop solutions to common problems. Donors can help in this process by providing timely assistance and support.



Mr. Simon Mizrahi, OECD-DAC

PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

PARTNER COUNTRIES

1. Afghanistan
2. Bangladesh
3. Bhutan
4. Cambodia
5. Fiji Islands
6. India
7. Indonesia
8. Kyrgyz Republic
9. Lao PDR
10. Malaysia
11. Mongolia
12. Nepal
13. Pakistan
14. Papua New Guinea
15. Philippines
16. People's Republic of China
17. Solomon Islands
18. Sri Lanka
19. Tajikistan
20. Viet Nam

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

1. Power and Participation Research Centre, Bangladesh
2. World Vision, Cambodia
3. International CSO Forum on Indonesian Development, Indonesia
4. Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy, Pakistan
5. Procurement Watch Inc., Philippines
6. Plan in Viet Nam, Viet Nam

DONOR COUNTRIES/AGENCIES

1. Asian Development Bank
2. Australia
3. Austria
4. Brunei
5. Canada
6. DFID, UK
7. Denmark
8. European Commission
9. Finland
10. France
11. Germany
12. International Labor Organization
13. Islamic Development Bank
14. Republic of Korea
15. Luxembourg
16. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan
17. The Netherlands
18. New Zealand
19. Norway
20. OECD–Development Assistance Committee
21. Portugal
22. Spain
23. Sweden
24. Thailand
25. Turkey
26. UNDP
27. UNESCAP
28. UNICEF
29. The World Bank
30. World Health Organization



Group Photograph of Forum Delegates

2006 Asian Regional Forum on Aid Effectiveness
Asian Development Bank Headquarters
18 – 20 October 2006

AGENDA

18 October	
8:00 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 9:30	Opening Session
9:30 – 12:30	Plenary Session: “The Paris Declaration in the Asian Region–Emerging Evidence”: Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation
1:30-4:00	Break-out Session 1: “What works and what doesn’t work in using aid effectively?” Group 1: Ownership Group 2: Harmonization Group 3: Managing for development results Group 4: Linking evaluation and policy
4:15 – 6:30	Break-out Session 2: “What works and what doesn’t work in using aid effectively?” Group 1: Alignment Group 2: Harmonization (in emergency contexts) Group 3: Mutual accountability Group 4: Evaluating aid effectiveness

19 October	
9:00 – 10:30	Plenary Session – Review of Break-out Sessions 1 and 2
10:45–1:00	Break-out Session 3: What are the challenges and opportunities for implementing aid effectiveness in (i) Asian country contexts; and (ii) the donor community?
2:30 – 2:45	Plenary Session – Review of Break-out Sessions 3
2:45 – 4:00	Roundtable Discussion: “Accelerating Progress on the Paris Declaration in Asia” Plenary Session (continued)
4:15 – 5:45	Open discussion/voluntary statements from partner countries and donor community
5:45 – 6:00	Chair’s Summary of the afternoon

20 October	
9:00 – 11:15	Closing Plenary Session
9:00 – 9:30	Presentation: “Going Forward – A Platform for Partnerships” Forum Summary
9:30 – 10:30	Open Discussion
10:00 – 11:30	Closing Plenary Session Closing Remarks

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The Forum covered the Asia and Pacific region, including the Central Asian Republics and the Caucasus.
- ² The Paris Declaration was the culmination of deliberations and discussions at the Second High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Paris in March 2005.
- ³ Details of background materials are posted at: www.adb.org/Documents/Events/2006/Aid-Effectiveness/default.asp. The opinions expressed in the background papers are the authors' alone, and do not represent the official views of the organizers of the Forum.
- ⁴ Five development banks—Asian Development Bank (ADB), Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), and the World Bank—continue close collaboration on harmonization and alignment in Viet Nam.

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For more information about the Forum, please see:
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