



# Joint Venture on Managing for Development Results

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## AGENDA ITEM 5.2 – ROOM DOCUMENT

### **Managing for and Communicating Development Results – Background Paper –**

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# **Managing for and Communicating Development Results**

**Background Paper  
Prepared for the OECD Informal Network of  
DAC Development Communicators  
(DevCom Network)**

**by**

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## Summary:

- The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the benefits and challenges of giving a more prominent role to communication in results-based management.
- It is aimed at 3 target audiences: government communication professionals in the field of development; government officials working on results-based management; and the wider aid community.
- The Introduction highlights the growing emphasis on Managing for Results, paralleled by a growing recognition of the importance of communicating results and efforts by some agencies to integrate communication into their results based management. However, it notes that critical mass has not yet been achieved in this regard.
- Section 1 highlights key aspects of Results-Based Management (RBM) and spells out the Managing for Development Results (MfDR) approach, including the role of the JV MfDR.
- Section 2 highlights the distinction between ‘communicating **about** results’ and ‘communicating **for** results’, arguing that despite significant differences the two approaches are complementary and relevant.
- Section 3 reflects on the synergies and common cause between communication and RBM/MfDR, explains how communicators and aid managers view results, and highlights key challenges that the two groups of professionals face in taking forward a results agenda in their work.
- The concluding section distils key principles and success factors, and ends with proposals for key stakeholder groups. Among the key principles, the paper argues that attributing the impact of aid to the specific agency should only be a residual objective of communicating **about** results. Instead, telling a compelling story about how aid as a system is making a significant contribution to wider development efforts is likely to have far-reaching impact.

## Introduction

The aim of this background paper is to provide an overview of the benefits and challenges of giving a more prominent role to communication in results-based management. It reflects the ideas and proposals emanating from the Informal Experts' Meeting on Managing for and Communicating about Results (Berlin, May 2008)<sup>2</sup>. It also takes into account good practice from bilateral and multilateral agencies. The paper is intended to contribute to a process of developing guiding principles on the role of communication in managing for results. It is aimed at 3 target audiences: government communication professionals in the field of development; government officials working on results-based management; and the wider aid community.

There is a **growing emphasis on managing for results**. Governments are being pushed to be more accountable to their citizens and to each other in the international context. In the North there are growing spending constraints; in the South the demands for States to reduce poverty are growing. Recent changes in the aid environment – including the advent of budget support, emergence of new donors and aid modalities, and growing focus on harmonisation, alignment and ownership – have led to a greater focus on accountability and transparency, cementing the pivotal importance of delivering and managing for results.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2000), Monterrey Consensus (2002) and Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) have been pivotal in advocating the importance of results<sup>3</sup>. Two of the five key principles underlying the Paris Declaration emphasise this new results orientation. Principle 4, on Managing for Results, states that “aid programmes should focus on results for people, rather than on process, adding that “[m]anaging for results means managing and implementing aid in a way that focuses on the desired results and uses information to improve decision-making”. Principle 5, on Mutual Accountability, asserts that “donors and partners hold each other accountable for performance and results”.

Transparency and mutual accountability for development results are essential to the political relationships that underpin development cooperation and more effective aid; the Declaration also recognizes that mutual accountability “helps strengthen public support for national policies and development assistance<sup>4</sup>.”

Accounting for results emerged as a key focus of the 3<sup>rd</sup> High Level Forum on aid effectiveness, held in Accra, Ghana from 2-4 September 2008. The Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) cites achieving development results as one of three key requirements for delivering on the Paris Agenda. Paragraph 10 states: “Achieving development results – and openly accounting for them

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on this meeting, visit

[http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34101\\_40411990\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,3343,en_2649_34101_40411990_1_1_1_1,00.html)

<sup>3</sup> Five core principles of managing for results were endorsed by development agencies at the international Roundtable on results in Marrakech (February 2004). In March 2005, partner countries and donors endorsed the Paris Declaration at the Paris high-level Forum on aid effectiveness. The Paris Declaration contains six specific commitments related to managing for results-actions. Zimmerman, R (2007), *Communication and Development: Practices, Policies and Priorities in OECD Countries – Results from the DevCom Donor Communication Profiles Survey*. OECD Development Centre. Accessible at

[https://www.oecd.org/secure/pdfDocument/0,2834,en\\_21571361\\_40017121\\_41626388\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/secure/pdfDocument/0,2834,en_21571361_40017121_41626388_1_1_1_1,00.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> OECD, *CIDA and the World Bank (2008), Building a New Aid Relationship: The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*. Prepared for the 3<sup>rd</sup> High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. Accessible at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/15/41201965.pdf>.

– must be at the heart of all we do. More than ever, citizens and taxpayers of all countries expect to see the tangible results of development efforts. We will be accountable to each other and to our respective parliaments and governing bodies for these outcomes”. References can be found throughout the AAA on Managing for Results.

Alongside this, there is **growing acknowledgment of the importance of communicating results**<sup>5</sup>. DAC peer reviews now include a section on communication. In the OECD Development Co-operation Report 2007, the former DAC Chair, Richard Manning lists 12 lessons from DAC peer reviews. Lesson 4, relating to public awareness states: “Invest in delivering, measuring and communicating results of aid-financed activity”. According to Manning, the lesson for donor countries is that “... public awareness of, and support for, development co-operation is fundamental. Peer reviews demonstrate that strong public support is the best guarantee of political and legislative support for strong and dynamic national development programmes”<sup>6</sup>.

The AAA also attests to the importance of communication, stating that “[a]ttention will also be paid to improving and developing communications on aid effectiveness for long-term development success and broad-based public support”<sup>7</sup>.

Evidence highlights the potential **of communication as a tool for the improved effectiveness of aid**. A recent survey finds that average spending on promotion for development awareness among aid agencies is rising – from €6 million in 2002 to €10 million in 2006-2007<sup>8</sup>. Public support for development in OECD countries has gone up by an average of 0.7 % points per year since 1983. Public opinion in favour of development rose from 70% or so in 1983 to 85% in 2004. Since 1983, public opinion has experienced upward and downward swings every four years, but since 1999, and on average, public opinion has steadily risen<sup>9</sup>.

A number of aid ministries and agencies are **internalising communication for results in their discourse and practice** on aid. The motivation for this is to raise support for and understanding of the importance of aid quality, and to promote implementation of the actions needed to put the principles of the Paris Declaration in place. Additionally, “... managers seeking to measure

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<sup>5</sup> Heads of donor agencies attending an OECD DAC Senior-Level Meeting and preparatory meetings for Accra in December 2007 highlighted Communicating Results as one of five important pillars of results-based management. In the run-up to Accra, the OECD DAC Joint Venture on Managing for Development Results (JV MfDR) proposed that the following text be added to the first consultative draft of the AAA: “Donors and partner countries will invest more in measuring, delivering and communicating results from development activities and in demonstrating that the role of donor and partner country leadership and political will is very important” OECD-DAC (2008), *Contributions of the JV MfDR to the Accra HLF*. Agenda Item 3, Room Document 3.1 (18 June 2008)

<sup>6</sup> He adds: “Obtaining public engagement and public support is always a challenge, and it requires active and targeted public education and awareness building. The public usually recognises, for example, that the degree of poverty and inequality in the world is both a humanitarian issue and a risk to all our futures. Yet there is widespread scepticism about whether official aid is effective in tackling it and whether scarce public funds should be devoted on more than a token scale to purposes outside the country of origin. Promotion of public debates on aid effectiveness and reporting on the impact of aid in improving the lives of poor people can help to generate support”. OECD (2007), *Development Cooperation Report* Vol. 9, No. 1, p.39.

<sup>7</sup> Par 30, footnote 4

<sup>8</sup> Zimmerman (2007).

<sup>9</sup> See sections of DAC Peer Reviews relating to Communication and Public Awareness (notes on Denmark, Canada, Luxembourg, Finland, Spain and the EC).

and communicate development results must deliver the necessary information to their constituencies, including their legislatures and citizens”<sup>10</sup>.

However, ***all this momentum has not yet translated into critical mass***. Donors and partner countries have not yet found effective ways to communicate results, particularly those related to development programmes. One major reason for this communication shortfall is the scarcity of information about results, an issue to be unpacked later in this paper. Added to this, funding and human resources allocated to communication is less than optimal<sup>11</sup>.

The challenge at hand is therefore threefold: measuring, retrieving and determining communicable results; ensuring that the results of aid programmes are well disseminated; and finding ways to embed communication as a key strategic tool for delivering more effective aid.

The rest of this paper will proceed as follows. Section 1 highlights key aspects of Results-Based Management (RBM) and spells out the Managing for Development Results (MfDR) approach. Section 2 discusses ‘communicating about results’ vis-à-vis ‘communicating for results’. Section 3 reflects on the synergies and common cause between communication and RBM/MfDR. The concluding section distils key principles and success factors, and ends with proposals directed at different actors.

## 1. Managing for Results

The argument behind intensifying the focus on results is that evidence-based information about public sector performance is crucial to meeting the public’s need to know, to creating political transparency, and to enabling governments and politicians to guide their performance and learn ways to improve it<sup>12</sup>. The provision of meaningful and timely information on performance also encourages greater emphasis on planning and offers good indications of what is working in government and what is not.

In developed countries the emphasis on results has largely been driven by increasing public demands for information, combined with increasing spending constraints. In developing countries the results impetus has been mainly driven by intensifying calls for more efficient and effective use of development funds towards poverty reduction and policy reform<sup>13</sup>.

### **RBM and MfDR:**

Nearly all bilateral and multilateral aid agencies as well as a number of middle income countries are now implementing Results-Based Management (RBM), which evolved in the mid to late 1990s as “a management strategy focusing on performance and achievement of outputs,

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<sup>10</sup> OECD Development Centre (2008), *Message to the High Level Forum 3 in Accra, 2-4 September 2008, on the Significance of Communication in Managing for Results*. From the Informal Network of DAC Development Communicators (DevCom Network). Accessible at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/20/41694856.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Zimmerman (2007). An average of 0.3 % of total ODA is spent on promoting development awareness, and of that promotion even less is spent on mainstreaming communication in development programmes and projects. Little or none is spent on partner country capacity building to communicate aid results to parliaments and citizens – although Paris21-related budgetary resources do fund statistical capacity building in partner countries.

<sup>12</sup> OECD (2008), *3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Source Book on Emerging Good Practice in Managing for Development Results*. Accessible at [http://www.mfdr.org/Sourcebook/3rdEdition/SourceBook3e\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.mfdr.org/Sourcebook/3rdEdition/SourceBook3e_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

outcomes and impacts”<sup>14</sup>. While different organisations conceptualise RBM in different ways, all coalesce around the idea of using empirical evidence as a basis for learning from past experience and using the information to manage better in the future<sup>15</sup>.

Managing for Development Results underpins and cuts across the Paris Declaration’s key pillars of harmonisation, alignment and ownership, and has emerged as a centrepiece of global efforts to improve public management for achieving development results. MfDR is defined as “... a management strategy focused on development performance and on sustainable improvements in country outcomes. It provides a coherent framework for development effectiveness in which performance information is used for improved decision making, and it includes practical tools for strategic planning, risk management, progress monitoring and outcome evaluation”<sup>16</sup>.

MfDR, which emerged in parallel to RBM, constitutes an effective paradigm shift from focusing on inputs (“how much money will I get, how much money can I spend?”) towards measurable results (“what can I achieve with the money?”) at all phases of the development process<sup>17</sup>. Stakeholders increasingly want to know about what will happen as a result of a given aid-funded programme in the medium-term (outcomes) and what the long term results (impacts) will be. Underpinning this shift is a recognition that previous development policies and programmes may not have led to the desired results.

MfDR has 3 distinct features: A focus on outcomes and impacts; a strong evidence-basis; and a suite of practical tools. MfDR covers all phases of the development process and its cycle has 4 core elements: agreement on results, setting of concrete goals, targets and strategies; decision making on policy measures and resource allocation (budgeting, contracting, design, operations, incentives etc); monitoring, evaluation and reporting; and feedback of performance into decision making (readjustment of policy measures and resource allocation)<sup>18</sup>.

Aid agencies still have some way to go in developing a performance culture focused on results, and many have faced difficulties in implementing MfDR<sup>19</sup>. Challenges include the fact that most countries have not yet implemented the entire MfDR system. MfDR is a management strategy

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<sup>14</sup> OECD (2002), *Evaluation and Aid Effectiveness; Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-based Management*. DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation. Accessible at [http://www.oecd.org/document/21/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34435\\_40381973\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/21/0,3343,en_2649_34435_40381973_1_1_1_1,00.html).

<sup>15</sup> UNDP (2007), *Evaluation of Results-Based Management at UNDP*. Evaluation Office December 2007. Accessible at [http://www.undp.org/eo/documents/thematic/RBM/RBM\\_Evaluation.pdf](http://www.undp.org/eo/documents/thematic/RBM/RBM_Evaluation.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, Marrakech 2004. Roundtable summary and other relevant documents accessible at <http://www.mfdr.org/2ndRoundtable.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Schmitz, S (2008), *Ongoing Work of the Joint Venture on Managing for Development Results*. Presentation to Meeting of Informal Network of DAC Development Communicators, Berlin 19 May 2008. Accessible at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/63/40748047.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> A 2006 review of the World Bank’s experience with MfDR found that policies and procedures instituted to manage for better results had not yet translated into improved practices at the operational level; managers and operational staff struggled to link goals to operations; Performance indicators were often inadequate; Many staff were unclear as to how to use performance indicators in their day-to-day work; and the institutional culture acted as a disincentive to managing for results. World Bank (2006), ‘Annual Report on Operations Evaluation’, IEG. Also see Chart 1.1 on p.4 in the 2008 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration, which provides a graphic representation of the limited progress achieved to date on Indicators 11 and 12 of the Paris Declaration. Accessible at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/44/41202160.pdf>.



that links different processes, units and levels in Government to each other, and most countries lack important links and steps to implement it in a coherent way. MfDR is a country-led process in context of the Paris Declaration, so the communication of results ultimately lies primarily with partner countries. However, there has as yet not been sufficient focus on the capacity development, leadership and political will needed to galvanise partner country ownership of the MfDR agenda.

Another challenge facing MfDR is the fact that in many aid agencies there remains a lack of clarity as to how to bridge the gap between the field and headquarters. This gap disrupts flows of results information required to engage in effective communication<sup>20</sup>.

### **Who does what?**

DFID, the UK Department for International Development, has long been focused on results and is a market leader in producing and using good quality evidence. However, its results-oriented systems have in the past failed to generate enough information in a way that can be easily used for decision-making and to communicate what development assistance has achieved<sup>21</sup>. To address the problems identified DFID has developed a Results Action Plan aimed at using evidence more effectively to ensure the agency is achieving the maximum impact from the development assistance it provides. Linked to this is the need to be able to demonstrate this effectiveness more clearly.

Many bilateral development agencies share DFID's approach and most have adopted results-oriented approaches, including establishing project-level results frameworks. However, a major challenge common to all these agencies is making the connection between project level and country programme impact, in an environment where reporting more effectively on development results increasingly implies being able to show the contribution of a country programme of assistance to a country's overall development progress<sup>22</sup>.

### **What is the role of the JV MfDR?**

The JV MfDR is one of four subsidiary bodies to the DAC Working Party on Aid Effectiveness hosted at the OECD<sup>23</sup>. It is made up of a group of bilateral donors, multilateral development organisations – including the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme and the Regional Development Banks – as well as partner country representatives. It helps both donors

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<sup>20</sup> OECD Development Centre (2008), *Summary Report, Informal Experts' Meeting on Managing for and Communicating about Development Results*. Berlin, 19-20 May 2008..

<sup>21</sup> Reasons cited for this weaknesses include: monitoring outcomes is harder than monitoring inputs; data quality and availability is poor in many developing countries, particularly in fragile states; attribution to individual and collective action is very difficult, especially when so much of the work is about influencing, advising & collaborating with others; and the shift from project-based assistance to programme aid, sector wide approaches and budget support. DFID (2008), Results Action Plan. Accessible at <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Pubs/files/results-action-plan08.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> According to DFID (2008), Many multilaterals development banks are using a system known as COMPAS (Common Performance Assessment System), which seeks to increase their results focus. To date, progress has been variable. The World Bank is considered a market leader among multilaterals, whilst UN agencies such as UNICEF and UNDP have also made laudable progress in becoming more results focused<sup>22</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The JV MfDR was the Working Party responsible for organising the High-Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness in Paris in March 2005 and Accra in September 2008. The other JVs focus on Monitoring the Paris Declaration, Public Financial Management, and Procurement.

and partner countries in meeting the commitments made in the Paris Declaration with respect to better Managing for Development Results<sup>24</sup>.

The Third International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results in Hanoi (February 2007) set the international results agenda by focusing discussion and outcomes along five core themes: Leadership and Accountability; Monitoring and Evaluation; Mutual Accountability and Partnerships; Planning and Budgeting; and Statistics. These themes inform the JV MfDR's 2007-2008 work programme which revolves around four pillars:

- A. Conceptual & Technical Guidance on MfDR, including work on the MfDR Country Capacity Assessment;
- B. Promoting Accountability for Results, which addresses Mutual Accountability at international as well as country levels;
- C. Improving Agency Effectiveness for Results, involving an assessment of aid agency effectiveness and the development of procedures and incentives in donor agencies; and
- D. Mutual Learning and Communication for Results, which includes the establishment and management of Communities of Practice in Asia-Pacific, Africa and Latin America; the development of a Communication and Cooperation Tool; and the Third Edition of a Sourcebook on MfDR.

As evidenced by the focus of its fourth work stream, JV MfDR has recognised the pivotal importance of communication in advancing the results agenda and is actively helping develop tools and approaches to integrate communication as a key pillar of MfDR.

## **2. Communicating about or for Results?**

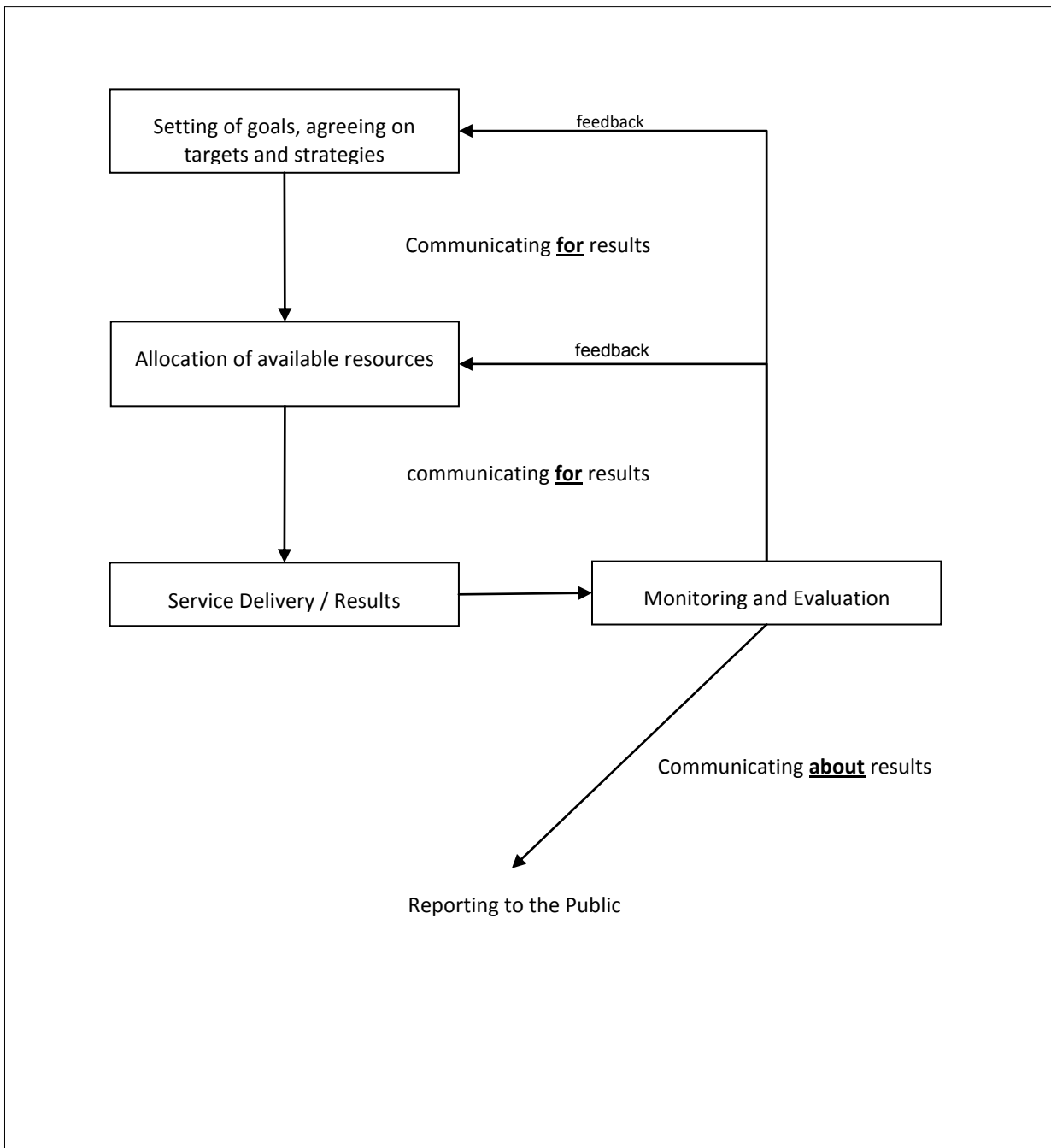
There exists a degree of confusion about what is meant by 'communication'. Conceptually, and for the purposes of this paper, an important distinction also needs to be made between 'communicating about results' and 'communicating for results'. This section briefly discusses these approaches as they relate to RBM/MfDR.

The first type of results communication, known as 'Corporate Communication' and core to the mandate of many OECD aid agency communicators, is largely about harnessing development results to communicate to taxpayers that aid is working. It focuses on delivering accountability. It seeks to strengthen donor accountability to parliaments and donor publics. It is largely directed at stakeholders external to the agency in question, although in some OECD countries aid agencies deploy part of their communication about results to position themselves vis-à-vis other Government departments competing for budgetary resources.

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<sup>24</sup> OECD (2008), *Managing for Development Results Information Sheet*.

**Figure 1: Communicating for Results, about Results, and MfDR**



Source: Stefan Schmitz, OECD-DAC.

The second type, known as ‘Communication for Development’ or ‘Strategic Communication’, is a tool as well as a process for the effective delivery of aid programmes. As such, it is highly compatible with the holistic nature of the MfDR process. Such approaches privilege a role for communication throughout the programme cycle, as opposed to exclusively as a dissemination function at the end of the programme. By definition, integrating communication as a tool for project or programme implies internal as well as external dimensions. Internally the emphasis is on harnessing communication as a tool for internal learning towards more joined-up action. Externally communication engages project or programme beneficiaries and other key stakeholders, including government officials and policy-makers.

What is important to highlight at this juncture is that these two types of communication are not mutually exclusive. Both aim to communicate results, and each requires clarity in terms of how results are defined and captured. To avoid confusion and for the rest of this paper the two approaches will be referred to simply as ‘communicating about results’ and ‘communicating for results’.

Figure 1 above sets out a simple graphical representation of how the two concepts fit in with RBM/MfDR.

### **Communicating about results:**

Aid agencies and ministries operate in a “complex communication environment”. The fact that staff members are dispersed around the world creates problems, particularly with decision-makers located at headquarters. In theory, this power asymmetry levels out as partner countries receiving larger amounts of aid in the form of budget support are more responsible for aid management, effectiveness and reporting on results<sup>25</sup>.

In terms of mandate, a majority of aid agency communication departments focus on educating donor publics about development and/ or convincing them that aid is working<sup>26</sup>. This has much to do with the negative perception of aid within many OECD countries – a paradox given that public support for aid has risen in recent years<sup>27</sup>.

Communicators are required to work closely with colleagues who manage and implement the aid programme to be effective in fulfilling this mandate. The pressure is on emerging donors with rising budgets, and particularly on those harnessing budget support, to develop good strategies communicating evidence that aid works in order to strengthen the constituency for development aid<sup>28</sup>.

As the “Communicating Results” survey shows, and for a variety of reasons, institutional and political contexts for communication vary markedly across OECD-DAC member countries<sup>29</sup>. There is wide divergence among aid agencies in how communication is mandated, resourced, staffed and implemented.

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<sup>25</sup> OECD Development Centre (2007), *Communicating Results: Experiences and Challenges in DAC Countries*. Accessible at

[https://www.oecd.org/secure/pdfDocument/0,2834,en\\_21571361\\_40017121\\_40030687\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/secure/pdfDocument/0,2834,en_21571361_40017121_40030687_1_1_1_1,00.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> While public support for development aid in donor countries is generally high, publics are also sceptical. Their support is described as “broad and shallow”, meaning that while the levels of people supporting the principles of aid are generally high (70-90%), scepticism about the effectiveness of aid is equally high. Zimmerman, R (2006), *Communicating About Aid Effectiveness, Budget Support and Corruption – Survey of Good Practices*. OECD Development Centre. October 2006. Accessible at [https://www.oecd.org/secure/pdfDocument/0,2834,en\\_21571361\\_40017121\\_41698319\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/secure/pdfDocument/0,2834,en_21571361_40017121_41698319_1_1_1_1,00.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> OECD Development Centre (2007) *Annual Meeting of the Informal Network of DAC Development Communicators. Effectiveness and Results: Are we ready to make a difference?* Lisbon, 6-7 November, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> These include to different political situations and approaches to transparency and accountability to taxpayers; rules on which civil servants can communicate and what governments are free to say; the different in-country media landscapes; relations with civil society and NGOs; budgetary and staffing resources for effective communication; and differences from country to country in location/ strategic importance given to communication in relevant agencies / ministries.

Differences in mandate and resource endowment create different opportunity structures for communicators in different DAC government agencies/ ministries. The survey finds that communication departments that are larger, better resourced and more integrated within their respective organisations have stronger leverage – in influencing the institutional agenda-setting process; in accessing the kind of results information needed from programme colleagues; and in commissioning the kind of market research they need to develop targeted communication to donor publics<sup>30</sup>.

The focus of the majority of OECD aid agency communicators on communicating about results, a core element of their mandates, means much less effort is expended on communicating for results.

### **Communicating for results:**

Slightly more than one- third of OECD countries currently integrate communication in development programmes or projects, although half of those that have not yet moved in this direction plan to do so in the near future. It is unclear what percentage of projects and programmes integrate communication. Only 10% of those donors integrating communication in development programmes or projects have a formal communication strategy.<sup>31</sup>

Communication for Development (or Strategic Communication) activities tend to be managed by implementing agencies – in less than half of OECD countries are such activities managed by aid agency communication departments. In larger donors or implementation agencies, Communication for Development programmes are managed by project formulation and implementation departments and programme and advisory staff, sometimes on an *ad-hoc* basis. Field officers are also responsible for these tasks, as well as regional or geographic offices of implementation agencies. Project managers can also do communication projects on an ad-hoc basis<sup>32</sup>.

In smaller non-DAC agencies, programme or project staff members are often assigned to manage Communication for Development activities on a part-time basis. Communication for Development tends to be financed from the core programme or project budget<sup>33</sup>.

Despite the low levels of investment in communicating for results, many believe that this approach will grow in prominence, for a number of reasons: first, the belief that communication has a role to play in delivering successful development initiatives is now more widespread; second, it is seen as a tool for strengthening capacity development and as such a form of accountability to recipients of aid; third, it is viewed by some as a prerequisite for achieving results and aid effectiveness; and fourth, it is considered as a tool for communicating results towards greater accountability and transparency<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, pp.10-11

<sup>31</sup> OECD Development Centre (2008), *Communication and Development: Practices, Policies and Priorities in OECD Countries – Results from the DevCom Donor Communication Profile Surveys*. DRAFT. Not available online.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Among multilateral agencies, Communication for Development is most developed in the World Bank, which refers to it as 'Development Communication'<sup>35</sup>. Communication for Development is best resourced and supported in institutions where aid staff sees its direct benefit to the delivery of programmes and projects. In the World Bank, for example, the communication-based assessment – which harnesses communication as a tool to investigate all relevant issues in a given sector – was developed specifically to demonstrate the utility of communication in helping deliver the Bank's core business.

### **Development Education:**

Some OECD aid agency communicators favour Development Education, a strategy aimed at stimulating the general public's interest in development issues. MFA Belgium defines the role of Development Education as: "to promote, stimulate and support global education and active world citizenship. Global education is about a globalising and increasing interdependency and the awareness that we are becoming world citizens. North-South issues and underdevelopment are important issues"<sup>36</sup>.

Since it focuses on raising donor public awareness, Development Education helps aid agencies to communicate about results. Yet it is important in its own right as some 80% of OECD countries conduct development education activities – even if these are not always distinct from Corporate Communication<sup>37</sup>.

### **What role does RBM play in their work?**

In terms of communicating about results, and when asked, donors say they communicate more about aid effectiveness than corruption or budget support because showing concrete results is the best way to convince parliamentarians and taxpayers that aid works. Five out of 15 respondents say they do this out of pressure from the political level or international treaties; 4 respondents say their agency directors demand an emphasis on the topic; 2 say they communicate about aid effectiveness hardly or not at all<sup>38</sup>.

Most aid agencies and/or ministries say they have expertise to communicate effectively with parliament and the public, but not the resources to do so consistently and to good effect.

As highlighted earlier, a results orientation has been central to DFID's way of working for some time. Until it was closed down in 2007, DFID's Information and Communication for Development (ICD) was a pioneer in integrating communication into programmes and projects.

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<sup>35</sup> The main goals of the Bank's Development Communication Division are to: Strategically integrate communication components into operations to mitigate nonfinancial risks and maximize development outcomes; Explore and assess stakeholders' motivations and perceptions toward reforms and other development initiatives, using two-way communication approaches, public opinion surveys, and other empirical research methods; Strengthen development communication capacities among clients and Bank staff to enhance results; and Build global partnerships in development communication C4D. *Mefalopulos, P (2008), Development Communication Sourcebook – Broadening the Boundaries of Communication*. World Bank. Accessible at [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2008/07/09/000020953\\_20080709145627/Rendered/PDF/446360Dev0Comm1ns0handbook01PUBLIC1.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2008/07/09/000020953_20080709145627/Rendered/PDF/446360Dev0Comm1ns0handbook01PUBLIC1.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> OECD Development Centre (2008). For detailed survey data on development education see pp.40-50.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Zimmerman (2006).

In recent years DFID's Central Research Department has developed a strong niche in the field of communicating research, or research communication.

**Box 1: OECD and multilateral efforts to enable, harness and improve results communication<sup>39</sup>**

- In **Australia and the Netherlands**, national aid effectiveness reviews proved useful for communication about aid effectiveness. In the Netherlands a communication adviser participated in the review team. In Australia, a communication adviser working as part of the Office of Development Effectiveness was consulted for the review.
- **Austria** has created a more results-oriented reporting template that helps results communicators extract the kinds of results they need to communicate.
- **Canada:** An annual results-based departmental performance report is required of all Canadian government departments. As regards development cooperation, the office of the Canadian Auditor General acknowledges that it is impossible to attribute a result to each dollar of development assistance given to partner countries. To make attribution easier, user-friendly electronic templates were developed and reporting deadlines adjusted for annual reporting so that Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) staff and partners could share information more easily and to facilitate joint performance monitoring and reporting. Staff members at CIDA are encouraged to monitor progress toward results in collaboration with country partners and fellow donors and a community of practice network has been formed to help test these new tools.
- **France (AFD)** has recently gone through a process of improving results-based Communication. Its 2007-2011 Strategic Plan includes a specific focus on RBM, Accountability, Transparency and Communication.
- **The Netherlands:** In November 2005, a "results in development" report was published, the result of a collaborative effort between the policy and communications departments. The report sought to demonstrate inputs, outputs and impact but this turned out to be very difficult to do. The report is sent to parliament, but also used by both the MFA's policy communication department and National Committee for International Cooperation and sustainable Development (NCDO) to demonstrate the impacts of Dutch development cooperation to the Dutch public.
- **Norway:** In August this year the Evaluation Department of the Norwegian Development Cooperation Agency (NORAD) published the second in a new series of annual reports on development results. The latest report features findings and recommendations from major evaluations conducted by NORAD in 2007. Norway is actively involved in the OECD-DAC evaluation network and has developed a draft Guidance Note on evaluating peace-building and conflict prevention work.
- **Sweden** has developed a mainstreaming process with guidelines; for its next annual aid report in 2009 it is making a systematic effort to focus on results. The communication department is working together with the sectoral department for this report. Parliamentarians have been interviewed to learn about their information needs. Embassies will be provided guidelines to submit information on results. The MFA will get information from multilateral institutions through their annual reports. Training is being provided to staff responsible for in country offices. In some country offices specific a communication has been created and specialist staff employed.
- **Switzerland:** In 2007 the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation sent media trainers to about 50 different offices to train field-based communication focal points and sensitise head of mission and other staff.
- **United States:** A post of "development outreach coordinator" (DOC) now exists in all USAID country offices. One of their priorities is to keep track of results and submit them through the website. DOCs receive intensive training before being sent to the field and USAID organises additional regional trainings to which field office directors are also invited. The US is also developing a comprehensive results measuring system.
- **Multilaterals** – The World Bank DevComm Team is mainstreaming communication-based assessments and pushing to include communication as tool and process in delivering more effective aid.
- **The DevCom Network**, through its work with JV MfDR, is pioneering the interface between managing for results and communication about results.

<sup>39</sup> Culled from OECD Development Centre (2007) and bilateral agency websites.

Accordingly, communication is given some prominence in DFID's new MfDR-influenced Results Action Plan<sup>40</sup>, which features 'improved communication to the UK public on the results of development assistance' as one of 10 key priority actions needed to demonstrate impact. The Strategy emphasises the increasing importance of providing transparent and clear evidence to taxpayers in light of the UK's plans to scale up its contribution to international development.

DFID is now working to set out a clearer public narrative on what has been achieved with UK assistance, and on the systems the agency has in place for effectiveness of aid. To bring focus to the requirement for impact, DFID's external communication will increasingly be in the form of themed campaigns that target specific audiences with specific messages, including through the use of story-telling.

Unlike a number of other OECD agencies whose communicating about results focus is almost exclusively on donor publics, DFID's Strategy emphasises dual accountability –to the UK public as well as to the recipients of assistance.

### 3. Common Cause

As highlighted in the introductory section, the Paris Declaration includes six specific commitments to managing for results actions. Communication is also explicitly mentioned in the Managing for Results principles<sup>41</sup>, and as highlighted earlier has been recognized by the JV MfDR as being of pivotal importance.

RBM matters for communication because the two are directly linked. Communicators and aid programme managers are united by the imperative of reporting on development results in a way that accurately conveys progress. Both rely on evidence to do their respective jobs. Both must be able to attribute progress to the aid their agency is giving towards addressing poverty.

Attribution has always been, and remains, a major challenge for the development community. Making the link between a given project or programme and improvements to the lives of people in poor countries is hard enough as it is. However, as the development system moves away from small-scale projects and seek to structurally scale up interventions, and as modes of delivery diversity, the question of attribution becomes all the more complex<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> DFID (2008), p.1.

<sup>41</sup> OECD Development Centre (2006).

<sup>42</sup> As one MfDR expert put it: "External development communication is a major link in the accountability relationship between donor agencies and their domestic constituencies. In the conventional 'aid industry', communication could focus on a public narrative around isolated projects conducted by the own agency. But the aid world has changed. There is now a call to increase aid effectiveness, with the Paris Declaration and the AAA being the main reference points and benchmarks. This call has fired a move not only from donor-led activities to country-led development strategies, but also from project-based assistance to programme aid, sector wide approaches, budget support and influencing activities. Every single donor now is becoming a 'shareholder' of a larger enterprise, and the attribution of measurable results/outcomes in partner countries to the various 'shares' is becoming more abstract and more difficult to communicate". Stefan Schmitz, OECD-DAC, in e-mailed feedback to Steffen Beitz, DevCom Network Coordinator, on the Draft of this paper dated 28 November 2008.



The DevCom Network and JV MfDR have recognised the need for a shift in the way communication directors of aid agencies engage on results, and have sought to retail new ways of working to programme managers – who themselves are anxious to demonstrate that the aid they are managing is working. Despite this recognition, however, the reality is that OECD aid agency programme managers and communicators do not have a track record of working together, and collaboration thus far has been limited.

Communicators say they face a number of key challenges that hamper them from effectively communicating results<sup>43</sup>:

- The new aid architecture involves so many modalities, that communicating becomes more and more difficult;
- The results culture in most organisations remains underdeveloped;
- Getting hold of output, outcome and impact data on results is difficult;
- Publics often do not consider governments credible, and this problem of trust affects the ability to communicate;
- There is institutional resistance to more active and open communication at four levels: the political level; senior level management; general staff; and the external (public) environment.
- Financial resources and adequate information systems are lacking;
- Technical reports are usually not accessible and require re-writing which is time-consuming;
- Policy colleagues often think of communication in terms of cost rather than benefit;
- Communication is seen as a ‘downstream’ afterthought in the policy process, and as a result communicators tend not to be part of programme development from the outset;
- Communication and evaluation departments could work better together. At present, while the role of communication in RBM/MfDR is known, not enough has been done in concrete terms to integrate communication in monitoring and evaluation. ;
- Communication is seen as additional workload, particularly by aid agency staff in the field who may also lack the necessary skills. Communication is also often not part of performance criteria for staff, whether in the field or at headquarters;
- There is a gap in understanding between headquarters and country offices as to utility of communication, and practical lack of effective ‘extranet’ communication infrastructure to link HQ and the field’;
- Some agencies decentralising resources to the field lack a coherent organisational take on how communication should happen in the field and at HQ.
- Capacity problems in partner countries hinder donors from getting the results information they need;
- The proliferation of bilateral and multilateral reporting systems at country level generate a multiplicity of data and place an excessive burden on partner countries;
- Communication about results remains a donor-driven, OECD affair, with very little buy-in from developing countries thus far;
- Initiatives such as the JV MfDR Communities of Practice bring together MfDR practitioners, and not communicators.

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<sup>43</sup> As identified by participants at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Informal Network of DAC Development Communicators (Lisbon) and at the “Informal Experts’ Meeting on Managing for and Communicating about Development Results” which was held in May 2008 in Berlin.

### **Defining results:**

Underpinning all the challenges cited above is that communicators and programme managers lack a common understanding as to the meaning of 'results'. Often, this is a false dichotomy as programme managers, even though they fully recognise the long-run nature of change, are as much under pressure to demonstrate 'quick-wins' as agency communicators are to produce success stories.

Development results are essentially defined as "the output, outcome or impact (intended and or unintended, positive or negative) of a development intervention"<sup>44</sup>. Although aid programme managers understand and acknowledge the importance of results, day-to-day management is driven consistently by resource mobilization and delivery targets, rather than results.

Since by their very nature medium- and long-term outcome and impact results are difficult to nail down, the practice of RBM often boils down to a focus on the measurement and reporting of less important results, particularly outputs. So whilst the discourse of results management is outcome and impact focused, the reality of day-to-day aid management is not as far removed from the needs of aid communicators as is commonly believed.

### **How do communicators define development results?**

Communicating about results helps bridge the gap between the actual purposes of aid and the donor publics' perception of what aid is for. Donor and partner country publics are not interested in the jargon of aid effectiveness *per se*. They would rather be given concrete examples of how poor people are benefitting from aid, and easily digestible numbers showing progress.

As a result, communicators have tended to focus on reporting inputs and outputs. Although this does not necessarily mean that communicators are only exclusively interested in the short-term, the reality is that citizens are considered 'project-minded', making it all the more challenging to communicate the results of aid modalities such as budget support – which is difficult to measure in project terms<sup>45</sup>.

A 2006 survey found that aid agency heads of information were unable to make much headway in communicating results because the information they needed was often not available – leading to tensions within the organisations. Policy departments did not integrate communication in their thinking and methods, whilst communications staff often lacked the knowledge and time to re-cast technical documents for communication to the public at large<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> OECD (2002), *Evaluation and Aid Effectiveness; Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-based Management*. DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation. Accessible at [http://www.oecd.org/document/21/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34435\\_40381973\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/21/0,3343,en_2649_34435_40381973_1_1_1_1,00.html).

<sup>45</sup> OECD Development Centre (2006). For more on evaluation processes and budget support, see Chris Elbers, J.W. Gunning and K. de Hoop (2007), *Assessing Budget Support with Statistical Impact Evaluation: a Methodological Proposal*. Tinbergen Institute Discussion Paper TI-2007-075/2. Accessible at <http://dare.uvu.vu.nl/bitstream/1871/11171/1/07075.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

## **What kind of information about results do communicators need?**

In order to communicate results effectively, communicators need two types of results:

### *Quantitative results:*

This is up-to-date, accurate, easy to analyse statistics showing tangible progress. Such information usually comes in numerical form, and tries to show link inputs (how much money was put into a particular project or programme) to results (what difference was made as a result of the investment). The output component of such data is often compiled by the monitoring and evaluation department or another specialised department in the given aid agency. However, these departments tend not to be able to provide quantitative data on outcomes and impacts on a consistent basis. Where they do provide outcome and impact results data, this tends to be a costly and time-consuming process. Communication departments then face the challenge of translating the numbers into compelling stories for consumption by the general public. OECD members using the quantitative results model include the Netherlands, Denmark and the USA, which has developed a result measurement system based on the system developed for the US President's emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)<sup>47</sup>.

### *Qualitative results:*

This is 'success story' information about specific interventions, individuals, communities, countries. This model involves mainly field-based aid agency staff identifying, writing up and sending narrative reports and where possible photographs, audio and video content on in-country successes attributed to the inputs from the given programme or project. The communication department at headquarters then packages and disseminates the stories to the public, via websites, radio, TV or other communication media.

Success stories are what journalists refer to as 'human interest' stories. The idea is that if the story is told in a compelling way, the audience will empathise with the individuals or communities featuring in the story, thereby validating their support for aid. Different agencies gather stories in different ways. A few agencies have dedicated communication staff in offices in partner countries. USAID, for example, has Development Outreach Coordinator in each of its field offices<sup>48</sup>. Many agencies rely on programme staff to perform this function, whilst others periodically deploy communication specialists from headquarters to travel around countries and gather success stories.

While success stories tend to be much more accessible to donor publics than numbers, they can be perceived as lacking in context and depth, and in some cases be perceived as aid agency-serving propaganda.

Neither is mutually exclusive, with a combination of the two approaches offering the best chance of success.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. See also USAID's MEASURE Evaluation Project at <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/measure>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

### **What information could results professionals deliver to communicators?**

Results professionals could develop templates for quantitative information that shows progress – this could include time-series ‘snapshots’ starting with the baseline and showing where progress has been made (as well as where it has not).

Evaluation processes could include the periodic or continuous identification of potential ‘success stories’ from the field, facilitated by better linkages between field and headquarter level between M&E and communication professionals.

One crucial difference between communication about results and communication for results relates to the demand for and supply of results information. Communicating about results is dependent on data provided by aid programme managers, and can thus be conceived of as a ‘downstream’ approach where communication. Communicating for results implies that communicators are involved in programmes from their inception, or ‘upstream’, enabling them to access data on outputs, outcomes and impacts throughout the life cycle of the project. In this approach, communication is both tool and process, and communicators for results play an active role in gathering results information, as opposed to merely receiving it down the line.

### **Communication incentives for RBM?**

Whether the RBM/ MfDR system can really make a difference in improving development results from aid is still to be fully established, as the field is still being developed through continuous learning. In one sense, an imperfect system does not need to be showcased, and results professionals who would prefer to perfect their system before sharing results information would have no incentive to engage with communicators.

However, if ways can be found to integrate communication into RBM/MfDR in the process of iteration, there would be mutual learning on both sides. The demonstration effect would then provide a strong incentive for active collaboration between results managers and communicators.

On a wider scale, another incentive for RBM/MfDR is that the more communicators can disseminate information about results, the more credibility citizens afford to aid and the aid system, and the more likely it becomes for them to want to continue to support aid with the taxes they pay. Such a ‘virtuous cycle’<sup>49</sup> would ultimately reflect positively on both communicators and results professionals.

Traditionally, it has been much more difficult to make the case to aid agency chief executives and senior managers as to why communication for development should be integrated in all programmes and projects. One of the biggest obstacles to communicating for results is the long-run nature of change. Aside from the fact that the results from programme or projects communication tend to emerge only in the medium- and long-term, the reality is that

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<sup>49</sup> For more on this see Ida McDonnell, H-B. Solignac Lecomte and L. Wegimont (2002) *Public Opinion Research, Global Education and Development Co-operation Reform: In Search of a Virtuous Circle* ..Paper prepared for the Europe-wide Global Education Congress, Maastricht, 15-17 November 2002. Accessible at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/39/8/1840009.pdf>

communication for development is as much about process as it is about output. Nevertheless, a rich body of evidence exists demonstrating the pivotal role that communication for development has played in successful programme and project delivery<sup>50</sup>.

## 4. The Way Forward

The common ground between communicators and aid managers discussed above provides a sound basis for more substantive collaboration in growing the communicating results field. However, a strategic approach is needed in order for this to happen. This final section of the paper highlights key principles and success factors for effective results communication, and proposes key actions for bilateral and multilateral donors, partner countries, communicators, programme managers and evaluators.

### Key principles:

*First*, aid agencies and ministries should use the full range of tools available to develop results communication strategies that are relevant to their needs as well as to the demands of different stakeholders.

*Second*, communication should be viewed not simply as a ‘downstream’ mechanism for disseminating results, but also as an ‘upstream’ tool for ensuring that a strong results orientation is integrated into every programme and project at the outset.

*Third*, there is much more common ground between how communicators and aid managers view results that is commonly believed. As such, it is this common ground – as opposed to differences in approach and nuance – that should be emphasised in efforts to strengthen collaboration.

*Fourth*, attributing the impact of aid to a specific agency should only be a residual objective of communicating about results. Telling a compelling story about how aid as a system is making a significant contribution to wider development efforts constitutes a harder task, but one which is likely to have far-reaching impact.

*Fifth*, aid communicators should beware of focusing on donor publics at the expense of partner country citizens. The dual nature of the accountability and transparency compact and the aspired-to country-focus of RBM/MfDR imply that results communication capacity be developed within partner countries. This would help strengthen domestic accountability, quantitatively and qualitatively improve information flows between partner and OECD countries, and have the overall effect of strengthening mutual accountability.

### Key success factors:

Of all the success factors behind effective results communication, commitment from senior management remains the key. Communicators must identify, energise and deploy high-level

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<sup>50</sup> See Mefalopoulos (2008). Also see WCCD (2007), *The Rome Consensus. Communication for Development. A Major Pillar for Development and Change*. January 2007. Accessible at <http://www.comminit.com/redirect.cgi?m=5d1a07c1af1705fbb8161bbdc0d47768>.

champions within their organisations, to convince others of the need to embed communication as a key tool and process for programme delivery.

Often, it takes a Ministerial-level champion with political clout to bring about organisational change. However, there are different holders of power in a given organisation, including programme managers and evaluation experts, and these should also be targeted.

Another important success factor is mandate. Organisations with a clear, codified mandate tend to be the best resourced and most effective results communicators. Getting that mandate means crafting a multi-pronged internal influencing strategy with a range of objectives – including raising awareness, fostering behaviour change and piloting promising approaches to demonstrate more clearly the benefits of results communication.

A third success factor is having in place the right incentives for politicians and programme managers to share results information, as well as for communicators to make that information accessible to the wider public. An example is that the Minister of Development Cooperation has a common interest in demonstrating results achieved during his or her tenure. Other incentives could be mandated by for example including relevant performance evaluation criteria, or involve reward and recognition for good practice in enabling results communication.

### **What can bilateral donors do?**

Beyond doing more to entrench a results culture, there are a number of concrete steps that bilateral donors can take to facilitate results communication. One is to improve the quality of statistics and evidence. To this end, the recent launch at the Accra 3<sup>rd</sup> High Level Forum of the PARIS21 Statistics for Results Facility constitutes an important step in the right direction<sup>51</sup>. Key to this effort is the ability to provide policy-relevant, quality, available and accessible data on an ongoing basis. Creating and building demand for quality statistics among key stakeholders, including parliamentarians, civil society organisations and communicators, is also key.

Bilateral donors can also ensure their results communication is as demand-driven as possible by commissioning periodic surveys on public opinion and attitudes to international development. These should be integrated into the M&E cycle and the data used towards developing better results communication as well as more effective aid programmes. To help stimulate interest in the results communication agenda among partner countries, bilateral donors should also encourage and provide seed money to public opinion surveys on development assistance, including aid, in partner countries.

As much as possible, bilateral donors should ensure that the objectives of programmes are measurable and communicable. This implies bringing communicators to the table at the outset of agenda-setting and programme development processes, and understanding what it means to provide data that can easily be communicated.

Managers in bilateral agencies can also mandate results communication as an organisation-wide priority that is every staff member's responsibility. As part of its effort to improve results

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<sup>51</sup> For more on this see Paris21 (2008), *Better statistics for Better Results – A New Facility to Scale-Up Investment in Statistical Systems through National Partnership. Framework Document*. Accessible at <http://www.paris21.org/documents/3128.pdf>.

communication, the Agence Française de Développement plans to set a communication objective for all country managers, as well as to add a communication agenda to activity reporting.

Given the variable geometry in terms of capacities to deliver results communication, international networking and sharing experience among OECD aid agency and ministry communicators is essential. Donors should compare notes and share with others critical know-how on important innovations. Smaller donors can also benefit from the experience of larger ones in order to make most effective use of their resources, thus the value of international networking.

### **What can multilateral donors do?**

By their very nature, multilateral agencies face a structural problem. Although funded by money from taxpayers within individual member countries, and therefore accountable to them, multilaterals are also multinational and multilateral enterprises. As such, communicating results globally is a huge challenge.

To address this problem, multilateral agencies can develop communication strategies that promote the notion of development as a global public good, sustained by global citizens who are aware of their responsibility and agency in making the world a better place. These could draw on the successes of campaigns such as the UN World Water Day Campaign<sup>52</sup>.

Given that they tend to be significantly better resourced than bilateral agencies, multilaterals can invest in developing good practice, particularly in the domain of communication for development. This can provide important guidance for other agencies interested in investing more in communication but lacking the concrete proof that it works. Linked to this, and given that multilateral agencies tend to be better resourced and therefore better able to gather long term outcome and impact data, a division of labour could be established between the multilaterals and their bilateral funders to strengthen the practice of communicating results.

This would also help multilateral agencies to better account to their bilateral donors. Much of ODA is channelled through multilateral institutions, which could be more responsive if bilateral donors wanted to know the results achieved with their aggregate contribution.

Building on the work done by MOPAN (Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network), multilateral institutions can also develop a unified accountability framework that all donors can make use of.

### **What can partner countries do?**

Partner countries find themselves in a situation of being committed to implementing the Paris Agenda but lacking the capacity to effectively do so. Added to this, the proliferation of donor reporting mechanisms and aid instruments at country level also introduces a sizeable transaction cost to partner country aid management. In such an environment, few partner country aid ministries have as yet taken steps to integrate results communication in their work.

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<sup>52</sup> Communication activities are implemented around UN World Water Day on 22 March each year. The campaigns aim to highlight the pivotal importance of water across the world. For more on this, visit <http://www.unwater.org/worldwaterday/flashindex.html>.

Despite these challenges, partner countries have an interest in developing a results culture, and should begin to put in place the foundations to ensure strong ownership of the agenda. Until this happens, RBM/MfDR as well as communicating results will remain an OECD-led, OECD-driven and OECD-centred set of agendas. The outcome of Accra provides a timely opportunity to advance real country ownership.

Partner countries should also strengthen their domestic accountability mechanisms, and improve transparency and access to information. This will help fuel domestic demand for results information and create the constituency for results communication.

### **What can communicators do?**

There are a host of practical lessons for communicators. These include:

- Recognising the complexity of MfDR/RBM and understand that finding the right stories is not always easy;
- Being pragmatic – start by engaging with colleagues on basis of good personal contact, and then widen the net;
- Striking a judicious balance between using qualitative and quantitative data (including ‘human interest’ stories);
- Engaging at high level (Ministerial, Executive level leadership) to convince of the need for results communication and get a mandate;
- Targeting senior civil servants after having convinced politicians;
- Identifying and providing communication support to internal champions to show the way
- Identifying and using incentives to make a case;
- Building tool-kits and story templates and make them available on agency Intranets and Extranets;
- Providing seed funding to projects or cash awards for results stories;
- Providing technical support to project and programme managers
- Using evidence-base (such as public opinion research) to lobby for staff acceptance of communication;
- Strengthening internal communication, continually emphasising knowledge and communication for development capacity building;
- Managing public expectations through honest and credible communication;
- Getting messages out through third parties who may be more credible than government spokespersons;

With specific reference to communication for development, communicators should:

- Build internal awareness of what is essentially a new agenda to increase agency-wide understanding;
- Gather, consolidate and present evidence that communication for development works – while there tends to be consensus around ‘media development’, the evidence on programme communication as a ‘public good’ is not well known;
- Get high-level buy-in – to make the case, target the Minister as opposed to the executive board, as it may be easier;
- Produce toolkits and offer staff training;
- Include communication for development in organisational project design manuals;



- Use existing forums to foster learning from experiences of donors that are closer to the cutting edge in terms of integrating communication for development in projects and programmes.

### **What can aid managers do?**

A growing number of aid agencies – including Belgium and the Netherlands – are producing annual reports on results, targeted at different stakeholders. Aid managers should ensure that their communication colleagues are involved in the conceptualisation of these reports at inception. Such collaboration would ensure that results presented in the report are user-friendly and communicable to different audiences.

Aid managers can significantly ease the task of communicators by encouraging the design of results formats and templates that enable the telling of stories about the impact of aid and development.

Aid programme managers can also provide increased budgetary support to communication, including ensuring a component of project/ programme funds are earmarked for communication.

### **What can Evaluators do?**

M&E departments often appear to be unaware that there is an emerging field of communication evaluation that parallels the wider quest for results. An important first step would therefore be for evaluators to familiarise themselves with communication evaluation, an emerging sub-discipline that faces many of the same concerns related to results as mainstream monitoring and evaluation<sup>53</sup>. This would enable them to reach out to communication professionals in their organisations and develop a common understanding of measuring for results that includes communication tools, processes and indicators.

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<sup>53</sup> For more on this, see Mefalopoulos (2008), section 3.4 on ‘Communication for Monitoring and Evaluation’. In particular, see the discussion on Measuring Results: Beyond the Quantitative versus Qualitative Debate’ (pp.141-144).