



How do stakeholders in Ghana perceive Multilateral Donors?

Research discloses a real interest from all recipient stakeholders for dialogue on aid management

In 2007 a pilot study was carried out by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in 6 countries to investigate the perceptions of a range of public and private sector stakeholders of the performance of seven selected multilateral donor organisations. The pilot study consisted of two main elements; a questionnaire-based survey and the dissemination and discussion of the findings.

This paper provides an overview of the findings from the study and presents key issues generated during discussions of the findings with a range of stakeholders in Ghana. The purpose of this paper is to disseminate key issues arising from the discussions with a view to initiating a process of dialogue around how government and stakeholders engage with donor organisations.

The Survey

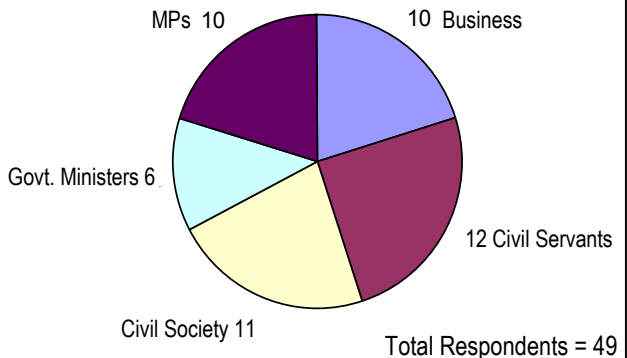
The survey consisted of questionnaire-based research in six¹ countries where the seven multilateral organisations had a presence, to identify the views and perceptions of different stakeholders about their performance. It also explored their preferences for which organisations should disburse additional funding, as current predictions from the Development Assistance Committee indicate that aid levels are likely to rise substantially over the next couple of years.

The research focused on perceptions of The African Development (AfDB) and Asian Development (AsDB) Banks, the European Commission (EC), the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) and The World Bank (WB).

ODI carried out the research through and with local coordinators² in each country, who were responsible for administering the questionnaires that were used to collate the data. The coordinators also identified the cross section of individual stakeholders that took part in the survey and organised the seminars.

This study was the first to explicitly record the views in recipient countries of a range of well informed stakeholders, who, through their activities either worked with or were responsible for implementation of donor supported programmes.

Figure 1: Breakdown of stakeholder Respondents in Ghana



The well informed stakeholders who completed the questionnaires were drawn from five groups; business leaders, civil servants, civil society leaders, government ministers and members of parliament. Figure 1 gives details of the respondents that took part in the survey in Ghana.

Box 1: The Paris Declaration

In 2005 the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was signed by 35 donor countries, 26 multilateral organisations and 56 recipient countries with 14 civil society organisations present as observers. It established global commitments to reform the way international aid was delivered and managed. It describes five dimensions and 12 indicators of progress:

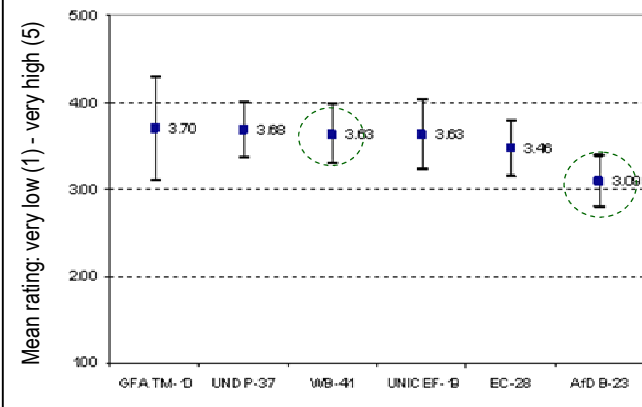
The five dimensions are:

1. Ownership - partners set the agenda
2. Alignment - with partners agenda and using partners systems
3. Harmonisation - use of common arrangements/ procedures and encourage shared analysis
4. Managing for results - results orientated frameworks
5. Mutual Accountability - mutual assessment reviews

Previous research on perceptions had focused on views from the staff of in-country donor offices and government civil servants, for example the MOPAN and SPA surveys. This was the first to incorporate a wider range of stakeholders from the public and private sectors.

The survey also analyzed perceptions against three of the five dimensions of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (see Box 1). These were ownership, harmonization with other donors and alignment with government priorities, as well as overall development effectiveness.

Figure 2: Ratings for Perceptions of overall effectiveness



The Ghana Results

The final report produced by ODI³ highlighted the overall trends in perceptions across the six countries. In addition it focused on the research findings from each of the six countries and looked at each of the seven organisations in turn.

The research findings from Ghana indicated that there was little difference between the ratings of the organisations in terms of perceptions of overall effectiveness (see Figure 2). However, when comparing only the WB, AfDB and EC (the organisations that have the capacity to handle higher Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding levels) the World Bank ranked higher than the AfDB.

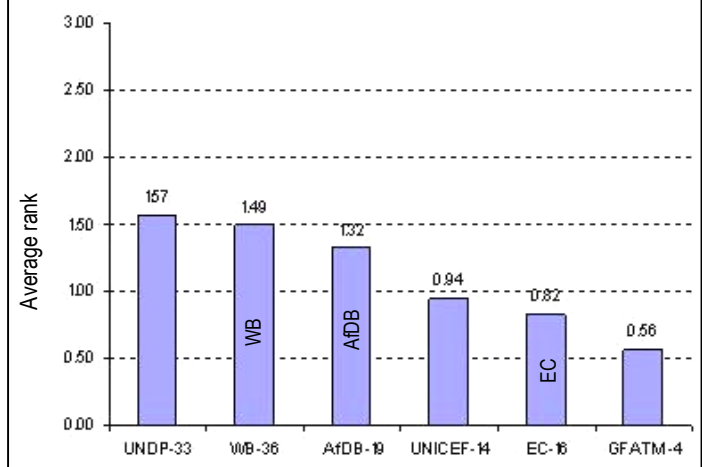
The results showed that when the organisations were ranked according to perceptions of the effectiveness of their technical assistance, the WB ranked highest, followed by the UNDP. The survey also asked respondents to look at the performance of the organisations against three of the Paris Declaration dimensions. Interestingly, against the indicators of government ownership, alignment and harmonisation there was again no significant difference between the ratings.

When the results were analysed to understand what might be influencing the perceptions of overall effectiveness, a clear answer did not readily emerge. It appeared that there could be different factors depending on the organisation. For example, the WB received high ratings for promoting government ownership and this seemed to associate with high ratings of overall effectiveness, whilst UNICEF's high rating for harmonisation was associated with high ratings for overall effectiveness.

The preferences for the disbursement of additional ODA generated interesting results, with the UNDP ranked first, even though it actually has the smallest funding portfolio.

As shown in Figure 3, amongst the organisations that can handle larger sums of funding, the WB rated highest, the AfDB second and the EC third. However, the rating as second for the AfDB was in contrast to its low rating by respondents against fifteen effectiveness criteria⁴, which focused on specific areas relating to funding and policies and procedures, and its lower rating than WB for overall effectiveness, shown in Figure 2.

Figure 3: Preferences for disbursing additional aid



Respondents to the questionnaire were invited to write additional comments to further explain their ratings. Some of these comments gave an indication that the higher than expected rating for disbursement preferences for AfDB may be due to the fact that it is perceived to have, or promote, greater national and regional ownership than some of the other organisations.

Stakeholder discussions

A series of seminars were held in December in Accra as part of the project activities. These were organised to provide an opportunity to communicate and discuss the research with a wider audience in Ghana. During the seminars an overview of the project background and summary of the global findings were presented. A second presentation focused on the findings from the research in Ghana.

Those invited to the seminars included the individuals that took part in the survey, other key members of the different stakeholder groups and in-country

representatives from multi and bilateral donor organisations.

This provided an opportunity to reflect on the global and national findings of the research and for stakeholders to discuss issues arising from the findings. A number of points re-emerged during the discussions with the different stakeholder groups. There was interest from the stakeholders in presenting these issues to the donor organisations in Ghana. They were therefore presented to the donor representatives during a separate dissemination seminar.

‘Recipient stakeholders welcomed the research approach’

From the discussions held with the different stakeholder groups it was apparent that they appreciated the approach and methodology of the research. They noted that it was not often, as recipient stakeholders, that they were asked for their views on issues relating to effectiveness of different donor organisations. It was acknowledged by the stakeholders that the approach the pilot had used could be further developed but that it had provided them with a well received opportunity to share their perceptions. The approach of using perceptions from recipient stakeholders was very well received.

They were of the opinion that these perceptions could, and should, be used as a means of triangulating other assessments of effectiveness of multilateral organisations currently being used by donor governments.

There was interest generated amongst stakeholders in finding a way to share the research approach and findings at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness being held in Accra in 2008. It was felt that this would provide a good platform to share the findings and approach with an even wider audience, with the anticipation that it could be incorporated into future work on monitoring aid effectiveness.

‘Ownership by and for whom?’

The issue of ownership came up during a number of the seminar discussions. This was highlighted by discussions of the results, which had rated the African Development Bank as one of the least effective when the organisations were rated for overall effectiveness. There was concern from some stakeholders that this could be seen and used by the donor community as a reason to reduce funding to the bank. There was a genuine

interest from the stakeholders to ensure that bilateral donors were rather encouraged to work with the bank.

It was stressed by stakeholders that capacity issues at the country level were likely to be affecting operations, which could be resulting in the low rating for overall effectiveness. It was clear from the discussions that it was one of the preferred choices to handle any increases in funding channelled from bilateral donors as it was felt to have more local ownership than the other organisations. This was echoed by the comments from the survey and was consistent with the high rating given to the bank for preferences for disbursement of additional ODA as shown in Figure 3. The stakeholders indicated that the organisation would benefit from other donors supporting the development of its capacity, which in turn would improve its effectiveness. They wanted to see this rather than a reduction of the funds it handled.

Discussions also highlighted that stakeholders felt ownership as defined within the Paris Declaration and related to effectiveness, was too narrow and that there was the need to re-evaluate this.

The definition currently focused on government ownership through national development strategies. It was agreed that there was the need to widen this to also include obligations to ensure national ownership of the development strategy. It was acknowledged that this would raise questions over how this could be realistically achieved; what percentage of the population would need to approve it to say it has real ownership, for example? However, it was suggested that this could be addressed by considering the integrity of the process used to engage people, rather than considering the actual numbers involved.

‘There is more to effectiveness than process alone’

The stakeholders felt that measures of effectiveness should incorporate more than just process related targets. From their perspective, the outcome and impact of the aid and development resources were equally, if not more, important. It was felt that there was the need to look at how this could be incorporated alongside the process focused indicators currently included within the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness.

At present, multilateral and bilateral donors are moving to channel increasing volumes of development support to governments via multi donor budget support mechanisms. If, as is being sug-

gested, issues of outcome and impact are to be included within criteria for measuring effectiveness, this could become increasingly challenging as more development support is directed through the government budget system.

This could suggest that there will increasingly be the need to ensure that strong independent mechanisms exist at the national level to monitor and track development assistance. Government accountability at the national level will be increasingly important if aid effectiveness criteria were to be widened.

'Stakeholders have a real interest in dialogue'

The final key issue that came across strongly from all the different groups was a genuine interest and readiness for more engagement between the groups themselves and also with the donor community.

They felt there was real benefit to be gained from creating opportunities within Ghana to develop wider alliances between the government and other stakeholders. Currently most engagement by the different stakeholder groups is either directly with government or with their relevant constituency groups. It was observed that there was actually very little dialogue between most of the different stakeholders, apart from directly with government.

There could be real benefit from any discussions on aid management and effectiveness through increased dialogue between the government and other stakeholder groups themselves and through multi-stakeholder discussions with donor organisations supporting Ghana.

During the final seminar with representatives from multi and bilateral organisations they also expressed interest in broadening current engagement and dialogue to include more stakeholder groups. Further discussion of the findings from this research could provide one possible platform for developing this.

Next steps...

In September 2008 Ghana will host the third High Level Forum (HLF) on aid effectiveness to review progress on the implementation of the Paris Declaration. The HLF in Accra will provide an opportunity to review progress on the implementation of the five declaration dimensions. In the run-up to this event there will be a number of consultation processes designed to feed into the September meeting. The findings from this research and the issues related to broadening the definitions of ownership and effectiveness highlighted during the discussions could feed into the national and international consultation processes being organised. The opportunity to present the research findings and approach at the meeting should also be created as stakeholders expressed support for this.

As all parties expressed an interest in engagement, further discussion of these findings could provide a starting point. The government and other civil society and private sector stakeholders could work together to develop and strengthen the dialogue around issue of aid management, and wider issues of how the government and other stakeholders work with the donor organisations locally. The up-coming HLF could create the necessary momentum required to start such a process.

The findings create an opportunity to also continue to work with the stakeholders to build on their interest in the development of Ghana. With their differing perspectives and perceptions, they are all in a position to positively contribute to this through working more closely with government and donor organisations.

It was recommended that:

- the Government of Ghana increase engagement with stakeholders including business leaders, civil society and parliament on issues related to aid management and effectiveness.
- donor organisations support the interest for further dialogue from government and the various stakeholders in Ghana.
- the donor community support the capacity development of the AfDB in Ghana as requested by stakeholders.

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For more information on the overall study contact ODI
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End Notes

1. Bangladesh, Ghana, India, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia.
2. In Ghana the Country Coordinator was Participatory Development Associates Ltd., www.pdaghana.com
3. Burall, S., Mease, K., Mall, P. and Datta, A., with Ndanga Kamau (June 2007) Assessing Key Stakeholder Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Multilateral Organisations. Final Report.
4. The fifteen effectiveness criteria were developed from previous work with recipient country stakeholders by ODI and separately by Development Finance International (DFI).