

## For more results-oriented engagement in multilateral development cooperation

**The Paris Declaration, with its strengthened focus on results, has propelled evaluation to a central role in today's international development cooperation. At the same time, the Paris principles pose challenges for evaluation: evaluation should be nationally owned and conducted in collaboration with other donors. SADEV's report (SADEV 2008:6) provides recommendations on measures that should be undertaken in order to strengthen the focus on results in Sweden's engagement in multilateral development cooperation, and to facilitate Sweden's ability to rely on evaluations produced by these organisations.**

*Since evaluation is an important component of multilateral organisations' results reporting, Sweden's format for assessing these organisations should reflect this emphasis more explicitly.*

*Sweden should advocate a simplified results reporting system within UNDP. Current strategic documents lead to confusion, and weak reporting of achieved results.*

The SADEV evaluation (SADEV 2008:6) takes as its point of departure Sweden's Strategy for Multilateral Development Cooperation (the Strategy), approved by the Swedish Government in 2007. The Strategy was developed as a first step towards more results-oriented Swedish engagement in multilateral development cooperation.

The Strategy stipulates that the performance of multilateral organisations should be assessed annually, following a specific format. The information drawn from such assessments should serve as a basis for future allocation decisions. The information should also inform Sweden's organisation-specific strategies for these organisations.

Such assessments should focus primarily on development results at the country level, and should be chiefly based on the multilateral

organisations' own reporting. However, in mandating these annual performance reviews of multilateral organisations, the Strategy recognises that evaluations produced by multilateral organisations are of variable quality.

### SADEV'S CONTRIBUTION

In this context, it is essential that the underlying reasons for the inconsistent quality of multilateral organisations' evaluations are understood. It is also important to understand how evaluations are used as a tool for effectively achieving results within these organisations. Such insights should facilitate Sweden's coherent and focused advocacy for enhanced reporting and evaluation functions, leading towards a stronger results-focused culture.

SADEV's report seeks to contribute to these efforts, through assessing the quality of UNDP's evaluations and related activities at the country level. An evaluation quality assessment was conducted through analysis of a random sample of evaluations commissioned by UNDP's country offices. UNDP's Kenya, Uganda and Nepal country offices were selected for field visits, in order to appraise evaluation activities at the country level. These visits included a review of UNDP's efforts to improve national ownership of evaluation: capacity building. They also aimed to capture initiatives undertaken by UNDP to improve harmonisation with donors in evaluation work.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this assessment, recommendations are presented for a greater focus on results in Sweden's involvement with UNDP, and with multilateral organisations generally.

## MAIN CONCLUSIONS

- Evaluations commissioned by UNDP's country offices are not of an acceptable quality. Weak capacities (in terms of both evaluation methodology awareness and financial resources) and an absence of accountability mechanisms (that would promote the production of reliable and therefore useful evaluations) may explain this quality gap. Since evaluations commissioned by UNDP's country offices are important building blocks in other, overarching, evaluations of UNDP, caution must be exercised in using the latter overarching evaluations as performance evidence.
- Outcome evaluations are not being effectively utilised as a tool in results based management. This may be partly explained by the deficiencies in capacities and accountability mechanisms raised above. But it may also be attributable to the fact that outcomes are described inconsistently in the various –

and often overlapping – strategic documents that guide the activities of UNDP's country offices. This has led to confusion within UNDP offices about expected goals and outcomes, and hence to a lack of precision in the formulation of outcome evaluations. Much work appears to remain for UNDP's evaluation policy, which was signed in 2006, to be appropriately implemented at the country level.

- UNDP's mandate as capacity-builder in evaluation-related matters is not sufficiently reflected in the activities of country offices. Further, the potential for collaboration with other actors on evaluation work (harmonisation) has been explored only superficially.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **For a more result-focused format for Sweden's assessment of multilateral organisations' performance** (general and UNDP-specific)

Since evaluation is an important component of multilateral organisations' results reporting, Sweden's format for assessing these organisations should reflect this emphasis more explicitly. In order to achieve a better understanding of the evaluative work of multilateral organisations, the Swedish format should frame:

- the internal evaluation capacities (in terms of both human and financial resources) at UNDP's country offices (including spot checks and/or a review of existing organisation policies in this respect);
- the existence and degree of the accountability of country offices' senior management regarding evaluation activities;
- efforts undertaken by UNDP to strengthen the evaluation capacities of partner countries;

- collaborations with other actors in evaluation work (harmonisation); and
- general evaluation quality, including some spot checks of the quality of evaluations commissioned by UNDP's country offices. This would also test the reliability as performance evidence of evaluations produced by UNDP.
- propose evaluation advocacy as a programme activity of UNDP; and
- suggest a greater involvement of UNDP's Executive Board in enforcing UNDP's evaluation policy, to ensure the proper implementation of UNDP's evaluation policy at the country level.

### **For a more coherent and strategic Swedish role within the executive board of UNDP**

Primarily, Sweden should advocate a simplified results reporting system within UNDP. Overlapping current strategic documents cause confusion, and weak reporting of achieved results.

Furthermore, Sweden should:

- advocate strengthened evaluation capacities at UNDP's country offices;
- advocate an accountability mechanism for senior management of the country offices;
- propose capacity building in evaluation as a programme activity of UNDP;

### **Issues to consider in elaborating Sweden's organisation-specific strategy for collaboration with UNDP**

The issues raised in SADEV's evaluation and summarised above should be considered in elaborating Sweden's strategy for future collaboration with UNDP.

In order to further support UNDP in cultivating a results-focused culture, Sweden should consider allocating parts of its non-core funding to activities aimed at promoting an efficient implementation of UNDP's evaluation policy at the country level. The provision of Swedish experts for capacity-strengthening activities could be considered in this respect.

## **SOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION**

This policy brief is based on Hedblom, Erik and Hildenwall, Viktoria (2008) *Strengthening the Results-Oriented in Sweden's Engagement in Multilateral Development Cooperation*, SADEV Report 2008:6.

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