RESULTS AND OWNERSHIP IN SWEDISH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Therese Brolin

Results and ownership in Swedish development cooperation

Therese Brolin

Therese Brolin defended her PhD thesis "Ownership or Donorship? Results and ownership in Swedish international development cooperation" in Human Geography at the University of Gothenburg in September 2017. Piror to her doctoral studies Therese worked as an evaluator at the Swedish Agency for Development Agency (SADEV). This brief presents the main conclusions of her thesis. A full version of the thesis can be downloaded here: https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/52511 .)

Therese can be contacted at theresebrolin@gmail.com

In EBA's series Development Dissertation Briefs (DDB), fledgling PhDs are given the opportunity to summarise their dissertation, focusing on its relevance for Swedish development cooperation.

Introduction

The increased focus on results within international development cooperation is a consequence of the assumption that development cooperation must be more effective and efficient. When development actors agreed on the eight MDGs in the early 2000s, they attested to the belief that development is possible and that the situation for poor men and women can be improved. Yet by the time the MDGs expired in 2015, far from all the goals agreed upon had been reached (UN, 2015). The increased demand for results and partner country ownership, have been two central approaches for achieving the MDGs. However, these approaches present diverging and sometimes contradictory strategies to increase effectiveness and efficiency within international development cooperation, with different implications for the relations between donor and partner countries. In addition, the demand for results by means of what is commonly referred to as the results agenda and the issue of partner country ownership are contested issues among stakeholders, who often differ in their interpretations and understandings of results and ownership. A major challenge for many stakeholders is, thus, how to reconcile the results agenda and partner country ownership. This study investigates how different actors frame the results agenda and partner country ownership and to contributes to an increased understanding of the dynamics and relations within international development cooperation. This is mainly a conceptual study where the aim is *to explore how the results agenda has influenced the relations between donors and development partners, and thereby partner country ownership*.

A central concern in this study is to investigate how stakeholders within Swedish development cooperation are framing the results agenda and partner country ownership. Therefore, two of the research questions address how stakeholders within Swedish development cooperation frame the results agenda and partner country ownership.

RQ1: How are different stakeholders in Swedish development cooperation framing the results agenda? Why are results required, what kind of results is required, and whose results are required?

RQ2: How are different stakeholders within Swedish development cooperation framing partner country ownership? Why and how is ownership promoted, and whose ownership is considered?

The relations between Sweden and its development partners are another central concern, since relations based on mutual trust are a prerequisite for partner country ownership. The third research question explicitly addresses these relations.

RQ3: How is the results agenda influencing relations between Sweden and its development partners, and how has it in turn influenced partner country ownership in the case of Swedish development relations with Uganda and Mozambique?

The theoretical approach adopted in this study is inspired by critical approaches to development. The results agenda and partner country ownership have thus been carefully scrutinised, along with the relations between different actors involved in international development cooperation. Yet this study does not only criticise international development cooperation; it also offers suggestions to improve future development cooperation. The results agenda is considered here a product of New Public Management (NPM), which has become a favoured public management system in many countries. NPM aims to increase efficiency and accountability, by introducing management systems inspired by management systems in the private sector that advocate a clear division of labour, where decisions should be based on expertise rather than political standpoints (e.g. Elias Sarker, 2006; McCourt, 2008; Rist, 2002). One of the core features of NPM is Results Based Management (RBM). RBM departs from the assumption that everything relevant can be quantified and measured through monitoring and evaluation (M&E) (Drechsler, 2005), where focus is on outcomes and impacts, rather than on the inputs and processes leading to these results (Elias Sarker, 2006; Fattore, Dubois, & Lapenta, 2012). NPM approaches have implied changes in responsibilities: the responsibilities of politicians and decision-makers have decreased, while the responsibilities of civil servants have increased. In other words, while politicians define policy objectives, civil servants are responsible for achieving and reporting results in line with these objectives, thus making civil servants responsible for the achievements of results (Aucoin, 2016; Burnham, 2001). The relations between policy makers and public servants within the donor country, as well as between donors and development partners, are of relevance for the implementation of the results agenda. NPM reforms are often imposed on the public service sector by the political leadership, who introduce new structures to manage the relations between the government and public servants. Several reasons are given to

introduce NPM reforms, but amongst the more frequently mentioned is governments' and ministers' lack of trust in the public service. For instance, there has been a general distrust in the public servants' capabilities regarding economic and efficient management of the state's resources (Aucoin, 2016; Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2015). There are different ways of restructuring the relations between the government and the public servants, but one of the most common strategies is to establish explicit mechanisms to distinguish policy making from administration, and thereby to increase ministers' control over policy making and implementation. Another strategy is to require public service managers to focus on the management of resources and to hold public servants accountable for their performance (Aucoin, 2016; Batley, 1999). Some of the strategies that are deployed to restructure the government's relations with public servants concern depolitisation, responsibilisation, and instrumentalisation. These strategies have consequences for all actors involved in policy implementation, and a central aspects when explaining the consequences of the implementation of the results agenda and its implications on partner country ownership.

This development dissertation brief (DDB) begins with a presentation of the overall conclusions drawn in relation to the research questions. First, it presents the conclusions of the research questions on framing and reframing of the results agenda and partner country ownership. Thereafter, the conclusions in relation to the influence of the results agenda over the relations between Sweden and its development partners. Finally, the DDB presents a discussion of the overall aim of this research, suggestions for improvements of international development cooperation, and ideas for future research.

Stakeholder's Framing and Reframing of Results

Results and ownership are not new issues in Swedish development cooperation. However, the concepts that have been applied to address these issues, and how they have been framed, have changed over time as a consequence of prevailing discourses in international development cooperation. As far as results are concerned, a prominent change has to do with the number of reasons why results are required; results have ceased to be a mere instrument to learn how aid effectiveness can be increased, and have become an instrument for managing development cooperation and to prove accountability to Swedish taxpayers. Another change concerns whose results are required, as well as who is

responsible for achieving and reporting results. Since the early 1980s, neoliberal approaches have dominated the development thinking. In particular during the 1980s and the 2000s, it is possible to notice an increased emphasis on development results that are possible to attribute to donors' development objectives, and development partners have become increasingly responsible for achieving and reporting development results.

Development actors interviewed for this study stressed that reporting results is not a new phenomenon on the development agenda, but they acknowledged that results requirements have increased and become more specific during the 2000s. As a consequence of this increase, development actors often experienced confusion in relation to what precisely qualifies as a result. Many informants claimed that stakeholders within international development cooperation had different definitions of the results concepts. However, this study has shown that most stakeholders from different development actors used the same concepts when they discussed results; they had, in fact, similar definitions of results. To a large extent, these definitions correspond with the definitions of the OECD/DAC, according to which results are defined in terms of outputs, outcomes, and impacts (see OECD/DAC, 2002).

Even though informants used the same concepts when they discussed results, they had different ways of framing the results agenda. This framing of the results agenda varied according to the stakeholder that the informants represented, that is to say, the Swedish Government, Sida, an INGO or a development partner. The main differences concerned the reasons why the results agenda was implemented, the best strategies to implement the agenda, and the reporting of results.

This study views Swedish development cooperation as one policy arrangement that consists of several policy practices. The results agenda is one of these practices. By stipulating development policies and deciding over ODA budgets, the Swedish Government decides over policy arrangements and practices within Swedish development cooperation. As a Government Agency, Sida has to follow these policy practices. If other stakeholders want to benefit from Swedish development cooperation, they must also act in accordance with these policy practices. The results agenda is, thus, a *master frame*. Although all stakeholders have to relate to *master frames*, they are able to reframe them; consequently, they are able to reframe the results agenda. Swedish development

stakeholders can reframe the results agenda so as to make it more suitable to their policies and strategies.

Framing the Results Agenda: The Swedish Government

The main reason behind the results agenda, according to Minister Carlsson and Sida staff members, was the lack of results reported on the achievements of Swedish development cooperation. The government attributed this lack to two factors: either results had not been achieved, or they had been achieved but not reported, which entailed that the results reporting needed to be improved. The results agenda aimed to address these problems. Besides improving and increasing the reporting on evidence of results, the results agenda was expected to improve effectiveness and efficiency in development cooperation. The increased reporting on results would facilitate learning from previous mistakes; annotations of success stories would improve future development cooperation; and the introduction of the results agenda would pave the way for a general improvement in the management of Swedish development cooperation. The results agenda was, thereby, considered an instrument for both achieving and reporting on development results.

One of main arguments provided by the government for the introduction of the results agenda was transparency: Swedish development cooperation had not been sufficiently transparent as regards how Swedish taxpayers' money had been used. The government argued that it was necessary to assure Swedish taxpayers that their money had indeed contributed to development; Swedish taxpayers' money could not "disappear" in corruption scandals or be misused in any other way if the government aimed to sustain the relatively strong opinion in favour of development cooperation in Sweden. An additional reason to introduce the results agenda was, therefore, to improve accountability in Swedish development cooperation.

Framing the Results Agenda: Sida Staff

Sida staff members did not share the Government's framing of the results agenda. Sida informants argued that the agency had always reported results in line with the Government's policies and guidelines, as well as in line with the agency's internal policies and guidelines. In other words, Sida did not share the government's view about the problem that the results agenda aimed to address. Instead, Sida staff argued that there was a need to improve the results reporting; in particular, they pointed out that more evidence

was needed as regards outcomes and impacts of Swedish ODA. The main reason why Sida wanted to improve its results reporting was to make Swedish development cooperation more effective and efficient by learning from previous experiences. Proving accountability was also considered important, but secondary.

For Sida, the Swedish Government's framing of the results agenda was an indication of lack of confidence on the Government's part and a strategy employed by the Government to regulate relations between the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sida. Sida staff viewed the results agenda as an important instrument to improve their capabilities to report on development results and, thus, to improve management. Yet they also perceived that the results agenda had been attributed a disproportionate significance in the context of Swedish development cooperation. Instead of being an instrument in the reporting of development results, the reporting of results had become a development objective in itself. The Swedish Government's application of the results agenda as an instrument to report and achieve results caused confusion among Sida staff in relation to how the agenda should be implemented. This uncertainty among Sida staff concerned mainly the possibilities that the agency had to reframe the results agenda, that is to say, it concerned whether and how Sida could reframe the agenda in such a way that it would correspond with the government's and the agency's views about the pursuit of Swedish development cooperation.

The discrepancies between the Swedish Government and Sida as to whether results had been achieved or not can be traced to their different views about at what levels results should be reported. In other words, should results reflect the overall objective of Swedish development cooperation (which concerns impact results), or should they reflect the different strategies and priorities established in order to achieve the overall objective (which concerns outcome results)? The overall development objective of Swedish development cooperation has remained almost the same since the 1960s. This objective is "to create preconditions for better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2014, p. 5). However, the priorities and strategies to accomplish this objective have changed over time. Sida has continuously reported results in relation to these priorities and strategies, and not necessarily in relation to the overall objective of Swedish development cooperation. Furthermore, Sida

staff have been concerned with the improvement of living conditions for poor men and women in partner countries, rather than with the reporting of results that can be of interest for decision makers and taxpayers in Sweden, despite acknowledging the importance of both aspects. The conflict between the government and Sida in relation to the framing of the results agenda concerns, thus, *why* the results agenda should be implemented and *what problem* it sought to address.

In 2012, staff at Sida perceived that their possibilities to reframe the results agenda was limited, partly as a consequence of an ongoing negotiation of power relations between the Government and Sida, which took place at the same time as the results agenda was introduced. In 2015, when the second round of interviews was conducted, the situation had changed somewhat: the relations between the government and Sida had stabilised and staff at the agency concluded that they did have possibilities to reframe the agenda. From their perspective at that time, the government stipulated which results should be achieved, whereas the agency was granted relative autonomy to decide how these results should be obtained.

Framing the Results Agenda: Swedish Development Partners

For Sida's development partners in Uganda and Mozambique, the agency's requirements concerning the results reporting were legitimate; in other words, Sida's development partners understood and accepted that they should be accountable to the Swedish Government and to Swedish taxpayers. They did not always share the view that accountability was the main reason to require results, but they did believe that it was very important to prove that the money they received from donors contributed to positive changes in poor men and women's lives. In addition, it was also evident for development partners that they should prove accountability to donors in order to get future funding. Despite donors' increased results requirements, development partners considered that they had possibilities to reframe the results agenda in such a way that they could justify the increased results requirements within the frameworks of their organisations. Many development partners were convinced that their work did contribute to development, so what they needed to do was to find evidence of these results and show donors that they could be held accountable. In Mozambique, for instance, development partners put great

emphasis on identifying and reporting "success stories" from their development interventions.

Despite the challenges stemming from the implementation of the results agenda, development partners perceived that they had possibilities to reframe the results agenda in such a way as to meet their own expectations on results and comply with Sida's requirements. Development partners in Uganda and Mozambique considered Sida staff relatively open and flexible; in their view, Sida was willing to accept that results had not been achieved as expected, provided that their partners were honest and reported results in relation to agreed indicators.

Stakeholders' Framing and Reframing of Ownership

As regards partner country ownership, informants used different concepts to describe ownership. Stakeholders, however, did not consider the use of different concepts in relation to ownership as problematic as in relation to the results agenda. One of the reasons why informants did not consider this use of different concepts as problematic was that stakeholders framed ownership in similar ways: they had a shared understanding about the importance of partner country ownership and adopted similar approaches to promote ownership.

Swedish development stakeholders used different concepts to describe ownership, which uncovers reveals different strategies and approaches to promote partner country ownership. For stakeholders in Uganda, "dialogue" emerged as a key concept in discussions about ownership, referring to strategies to promote ownership. In Mozambique, "good donorship" and "partnership" were concepts frequently used in relation to ownership. Both concepts placed emphasis on donors' roles and responsibilities in development cooperation. Despite the differences in the use of concepts and definition of strategies in relation to ownership, no significant discrepancies emerged in relation to how ownership was diagnostically framed and motivated. The main justification to increase development partners' ownership was to improve effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability in international development cooperation. The underlying assumption was that these were not possible to achieve without the participation of partner countries.

Informants frequently referred to the Paris Declaration when they discussed ownership and how it was framed. Since the Swedish Government has signed the Paris Declaration and makes reference to it in its policies on development cooperation, the Paris Declaration stipulates the *master frame* of ownership. As opposed to their position in relation to the results agenda, most stakeholders agreed with the framing of ownership as it is presented in the Paris Declaration. They did not consider it a challenge to (re)frame partner country ownership. Furthermore, the Paris Declaration contributed to a shared understanding of the importance of partner country ownership, as well as of the procedures to achieve ownership. The main difference concerning how stakeholders framed ownership had to do with whose ownership they should promote: partner countries', development partners', beneficiaries', or donors' ownership. Development partners were framing ownership in similar ways, yet this common approach was not reflected in practice, since there are a number of challenges associated with the promotion of ownership. Many of these challenges concern the relations between development stakeholders.

Power Relations and the Results Agenda

The possibilities to reframe the results agenda are closely associated with ownership, and they refer to what can be described as power over and power to do. Power over has to do with the rights to make authoritative decisions in relation to policies, that is to say, to define what results should be achieved; power to do refers to the rights to control processes and outcomes related to these policies, that is to say, it has to do with how results should be reported. Besides, the results agenda is closely associated with development objectives, processes, and outcomes. Rather than carrying positive connotations related to rights, however, the results agenda is mainly associated with increased responsibilities for actors that work within Swedish development cooperation. The results agenda has made Sida and its development partners responsible for reporting in line with the Swedish Government's development objectives. In addition, Swedish development cooperation has become more instrumentalised, which has also increased the requirements on development actors to follow protocols and procedures stipulated by the Swedish Government. The results agenda challenges the idea of ownership,

understood as power over and power to do, which also makes the reframing of the agenda more problematic for the concerned actors.

It should be possible to combine the results agenda and partner country ownership, provided that development partners' agenda and objectives establish how results should be reported, which results should be reported, and when they should be reported. However, this is not always the case; one of the main reasons why development partners cannot set the development agenda and objectives is donors' lack of trust in their development partners.

The introduction of the results agenda in international development cooperation is in line with the NPM approaches that have dominated much of public management since the early 1980s. NPM entails a rather mechanical and top-down approach to public management, where politicians make decisions based on evidence of results, so that implementers of the decisions (public servants) are not necessarily involved in the decision-making process. One explanation for this detachment of civil servants from decision-making processes is the government's lack of trust in public servants' capacity to account for and implement public services in the most efficient way. The Swedish Government communicated that it did not trust Sida's effectiveness and accuracy in relation to the implementation of Swedish development cooperation. Sida, on the other hand, did not trust the government's and the MFA's competence to make adequate decisions about Swedish development cooperation. From 2006 to the early 2010s, relations between the Swedish Government and Sida were not characterised by mutual trust; in other words, relations between both were quite strained in this period.

Unlike most other policy areas, policies that concern international development cooperation are implemented in other countries. Consequently, international development cooperation involves relations among several actors, during different stages of implementation. Put differently, development policies travel much farther than many other policies, both in terms of place (from a country in the global North to a country in the global South) and in terms of space (from one political context to another, which entails that a huge number of actors are able to reframe the policy). This long chain of actors makes policy making and implementation of development cooperation very complex. Development cooperation also implies that taxpayers' money does not directly

benefit citizens in the donor country and, in addition, development cooperation is often carried out in difficult contexts with a high risk of misuse of funds and corruption. This combination of factors makes international development cooperation and policies more vulnerable for criticism than many other policy areas, which in turn gives rise to a high demand for accountability. Yet the complex nature of international development cooperation also makes control a more complicated issue. In sum, international development cooperation is a policy area in which Governments could have great interest in adopting NPM approaches in line with the results agenda, but it is also a policy area in which the great number of actors involved makes it difficult to implement NPM approaches.

The introduction of the results agenda created tension within the administration of Swedish international development cooperation, and it has altered the relations between Sida and its development partners. However, since these relations were affected in different ways depending on the actors involved (that is, tension could emerge between Swedish stakeholders or between Sida and development partners), they will be addressed separately in the following sections.

The Results Agenda and Changed Relations between the Swedish Government and Sida

The results agenda has entailed a number of changes in the relations between the Swedish Government and Sida, which has influenced Sida's *power over* and *power to do*. These changes are, in part at least, a consequence of the Swedish Government's adoption of NPM approaches to public management.

Responsibilisation Processes in Swedish Development Cooperation

The results agenda was introduced in Swedish development cooperation when the Swedish Government was engaged in reforming development cooperation. The government aimed, among other things, to clarify mandates and responsibilities of the MFA and Sida respectively. The results agenda was an instrument in this process insofar as it specified that Sida was responsible for the achievement and reporting of results, while the Government should stipulate which particular development results Sida should achieve. As stated above, international development cooperation is often politically sensitive. By making Sida responsible for the achievement of development results, the

11

Government reduced its own responsibilities, and thereby diminish the political risks associated with international development cooperation.

With the results agenda, the Government's requirements on evidence of results increased. Besides the reasons presented above, the Government's increased demand for results with the intentions to create conditions for future decision-making processes based on experiences from previous development cooperation. Instead of basing international development cooperation on political arguments, the Government wished to promote development cooperation based on facts and evidence of results. By removing the political character of decision making and replacing it with notions of expertise, the Government would be able to reduce some of the political risks associated with international development cooperation. On the other hand, such depoliticisation processes could also allow the government to avoid some of its responsibilities, which would in turn make it more difficult to hold the Government accountable for the decisions it has made.

Sida informants took the results agenda as an indication of the change in the power relations between the agency and the government. Sida had been given the responsibility to carry out the decisions made by the Government. This limited the agency's possibilities to influence which results should be achieved, and why they should be achieved. Sida staff raised objections about these changed roles on the grounds that the government and the MFA did not have the required competence to make decisions about the expected outcomes of Swedish development cooperation. From Sida's perspective, the MFA's lack of competence led to the establishment of unrealistic or irrelevant policy objectives for Swedish development cooperation. Sida was not only required to adopt policies that the staff considered irrelevant; they were also forced to relay these policies to their development partners. The results agenda was one of these policies that Sida staff considered irrelevant or even counterproductive. They argued that Sida had always reported results and that the results required from its development partners were already extensive. Increasing the results requirements would imply that development partners would have to invest their already scarce resources in M&E, rather than in concrete development efforts. In addition, as Sida did not work directly with the implementation of development cooperation, the agency relied on results reported by its development partners when they reported results to the Government. In other words, Sida was trapped

in what could be described as "the squeezed middle". Sida did not agree with the government on the necessity of increasing the results requirements. Nevertheless, Sida staff had to implement the results agenda and make their development partners follow the required protocols and procedures.

As regards partner country ownership, Sida staff believed that the results agenda reduced development partners' ownership over development processes. The demand for reporting results in line with Swedish development objectives had increased, and these results should preferably be clearly attributable to Swedish development interventions. These requirements are difficult to reconcile with partner country ownership.

Instrumentalisation of Swedish Development Cooperation

Intentionally or not, the Swedish Government used the results agenda as a way to manage and control the implementation of Swedish development cooperation between 2006 and 2014. One of the reasons why the Government enforced the results requirements on Sida was an alleged scarcity of development results. In order to prove to the Government that development results had indeed been achieved, Sida had to increase its focus on results by following protocols and procedures stipulated by the Government. Results strategies accompanied by specific results requirements and matrixes, for instance, were introduced as new guidelines that Sida should follow to pursue in order to report on its bilateral development cooperation. These requirements further specified the role of each actor in Swedish development cooperation, so that each actor could also be held accountable. Some actors argued that the demand for accountability had gone too far, to the point that reports on mistakes and failures were rewarded, rather than development achievements. For Sida, the results agenda entailed a loss of *power over* and *power to do*.

Over the last few years, however, Sida has regained some of its power: the Swedish Government defines the objectives of Swedish development cooperation, but Sida staff feel that they have the mandate to decide how development results should be achieved and reported. Two explanations can be provided for this change. One has to do with awareness: Sida staff have a clearer idea about how they can reframe the results agenda. The other explanation has to do with the change of Government in Sweden: the new Government gives more priority to thematic issues, such as climate change and gender equality, than to the management of Swedish development cooperation.

The Results Agenda and Relations between Sida and its Development Partners

The changed relations between the Swedish Government and Sida have also had consequences for Sida's relations with its development partners. The results agenda has played a central role in changing these relations by instrumentalising development cooperation. More specifically, the impact of the results agenda over Sida's development partners could be felt in relation to whose results should be achieved and reported.

Responsibilisation and the Relations between Sida and its Development Partners

Sida's field offices did not work directly with the implementation of Swedish development cooperation; rather, they worked with development partners. These development partners implemented development cooperation or worked with other partner organisations that carried out development cooperation. Consequently, many actors were involved in the implementation of Swedish development cooperation, which entailed that results should be reported at several stages. In order to report results, Sida depended on results reported by other stakeholders, all of which had to report results in line with Swedish development objectives. Since Sida did not want to interfere in its development partners' ownership, one of the main criteria for the agency in the selection of development partners was that these partners' objectives were in line with Swedish development objectives. It is unclear to what extent development partners changed or adjusted their objectives in order to suit Swedish objectives. Development partners' *power over* was limited unless their development objectives corresponded with Sweden's objectives, and unless partner organisations adjusted their development agendas to suit these objectives.

Many development partners prioritised the reporting of results in line with the development objectives established by Sida and other donors, since this compliance with their demands was a prerequisite to get future funding. Reporting results entailed, for development partners, that donors should be informed that their money made a difference for beneficiaries. Besides, several development partners considered the reporting of results a mere formality, since they were convinced that their development interventions did make a difference in their beneficiaries' lives.

Instrumentalisation of Sida's Development Relations with Development Partners

When the Swedish Government's requirement on Sida to report results increased, Sida's results requirements on the partner organization also increased. Sida specified with more clarity which kind of results it expected from its development partners, who had to follow reporting procedures in relation to indicators that they did not always consider relevant. Evidence of results was crucial to get funding, since it was necessary to show that Sida's funding did make a difference. For some development partners, the results agenda implied that reporting evidence of results had actually become more important than achieving results. Several development partners were frustrated and claimed that their development efforts did make a difference, but they were not able to show the success of their interventions by following the required protocols and procedures. Yet the increased focus on results was also perceived as something positive. Sida's increased interest in the results introduced a feeling of recognition amongst some of Sida's development partners, implying that Sida and the Swedish Government cared and were concerned about what was taking place in partner countries.

All development partners faced challenges in terms of resources and competence to report development results in the way required by Sida. Staff trained in M&E often left smaller CSOs to get better paid jobs in larger, often multilateral, organisations. Development partners in Uganda were particularly worried about the increased focus on the reporting of results, rather than on the achievement of results. Given the fierce competition for funding, they feared that dishonest organisations that were competent in reporting results but not really committed to development would have advantage.

Conclusions: The Results Agenda, Relations, and Ownership

The unclear allocation of mandate is a particularly significant issue as regards power relations in international development cooperation. Mandate refers here to the possibilities to define overall development objectives, which entails the possibilities to define expected results and to set the agenda concerning how these results should be reached. Ownership, intersects, thus, with the allocation of mandate. The results agenda has implied a change: donors' mandate has increased, whereas development partners' mandate has decreased. The results agenda has also entailed changes in terms of responsibilities, that is to say, development partners have been allocated more

responsibilities. The results agenda promotes an approach to development cooperation in which development partners have a significant share of responsibilities but limited mandate. This imbalance has a negative impact on partner country ownership, which implies that development partners (representing partner countries) should have both mandates and responsibilities in the pursuit of development in their own countries.

In the Swedish case, the introduction of the results agenda in international development cooperation has influenced relations between the Swedish Government and Sida. The Government has used the agenda as a strategic instrument and as a management tool. By defining which results Sida should report and limiting the agency's influence in decision-making processes, the government constrained Sida's power over development cooperation. By stipulating which procedures and protocols Sida should follow, the Government also reduced Sida's power over processes. More attention has been given to Swedish development objectives and results reported in line with these objectives, than to the encouragement of partner country ownership. Although the examples given here apply to the Swedish case, the situation is similar and even more accentuated in other donor countries. In the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands, for instance, the debate about the results agenda has been intense, in particular as regards what qualifies as a result and who sets the results agenda. In these countries, the Government has increased its demand for results, paving the way for increased instrumentalisation within their development cooperation (cf. Eyben et al., 2015).

For development partners, the results agenda has implied instrumentalisation of development cooperation, insofar as requirements to report results according to agreed protocols and procedures have increased. The instrumentalisation of development cooperation has, in turn, changed the focus of development cooperation: evidence of results, regardless of their relevance, has been given priority over improvements in the lives of poor men and women.

Discussion and Suggestions for Future Development Cooperation and Research

One of the main conclusions drawn here is that there is confusion surrounding what the results agenda is. Instead of functioning as a means to achieve an objective, the results agenda has become an objective in itself. Decision makers have lost track of the overall objective of international development cooperation, i.e. to improve the lives of poor men

and women. The results agenda has also changed the focus of international development cooperation. Donors' development objectives, and the results achieved in relation to these objectives, have come to play a more prominent role, given that it was considered necessary to maintain political support from taxpayers in donor countries. In addition, solidarity with people in the global South seems to have become a weaker motivation in the pursuit of international development cooperation. More attention has been given to issues that also carry consequences for people in the global North, such as climate change, terrorism, spread of diseases, or refugee crises in the global North. Furthermore, ownership in combination with responsibilisation processes might imply that development partners bear all the responsibility for development, and donor countries in the global North do not assume any responsibility for development processes in the global South.

While the results agenda should be a means for implementing and reporting development interventions, partner country ownership should concern the fundamental idea about what development is and how it should be pursued. Partner country ownership departs from the assumption that only those affected by poverty or development can actually tell what development entails for them and how it could be achieved. As a consequence of this assumption, development cannot be accomplished if development partners are not allowed to define objectives and set the agenda for the pursuit of development and the reporting of results.

It is not impossible to combine the results agenda and partner country ownership, provided that the point of departure of development cooperation is the objectives of development partners and their agendas. As the title of this thesis indicates, donorship has been given priority in development cooperation, yet development cooperation does not necessarily have to be pursued with a focus on donors' development objectives and results; it should be possible to bring the results agenda and partner country ownership together.

Suggestions for Future Development Cooperation and Research
This study intended to investigate challenges within international development cooperation and to suggest how these challenges can be addressed. Needless to say, the scope of this study is limited, and more research is required in order to shed light on

relations between donors and partner countries. Nevertheless, it is possible to suggest how development stakeholders, in particular how donors can improve their relations with development partners, as well as to identify issues that can benefit from future research.

Unclear mandates: One of the main problems in the implementation of the results agenda was lack of clarity as far as mandates are concerned. In other words, it was not clear how development stakeholders could reframe policy practices such as the results agenda. When new policy practices are introduced, decision makers must make sure that their communication is unambiguous; policies must be communicated in a consistent way, whether in writing or orally. All actors, including decision makers, must take responsibility for their actions. It is important to clarify the responsibilities that apply to different actors, as the Swedish Government has done as regards the relations between the MFA and Sida. However, it is also important to clarify each stakeholder's mandate, particularly in terms of the extent to which stakeholders can reframe a policy practice.

Clarity in framing: Decision makers must be clear about the way they frame a policy and explicit about the goals of this policy. In other words, they must specify with clarity which problem the policy seeks to address and how this problem is going to be addressed. They must also make sure to provide solid justifications for their particular way of framing an issue, and collect plenty of information about the context in which they operate. Awareness of that actors reframe policies and of how development stakeholders reframe policy practices would facilitate communication between actors.

Partner country ownership: In development cooperation that promotes partner country ownership, development partners should define goals and set the agenda for the pursuit of these goals. Development partners should, therefore, define which results are expected and how they should be measured. Nevertheless, unequal power relations between donors and development partners are an inescapable fact, since one actor has the resources on which the other actor depends. Donors must provide a clear account of what partner country ownership entails and specify how it should be promoted in all policy practices, including the results agenda. If donors are sincere in their effort to promote partner country ownership, they must let go of some of their power.

This study focused on the conceptualisation of the results agenda and partner country ownership. Future research could take this study one step further and investigate how the

results agenda has influenced partner country ownership of ownership in practice. It would be possible to explore whether and how development partners adjust their objectives and agenda to suit the development policies of donors. A future study could follow specific interventions from their formulation through implementation to results reporting. It would be relevant to include development actors that applied for funding but were rejected, and examine the reasons why they were not selected as development partners in Swedish development cooperation. New forms of development cooperation have emerged over the last few years, such as Payment By Results (PBR), in which ODA is disbursed only when the expected results have been achieved. This aid modality is entirely governed by results, so that responsibilisation processes are arguably even more evident in this kind of development cooperation. It would be relevant to conduct a study that explores how the PBR for relations between donors and partner countries and its consequences for future development cooperation.

References

Aucoin, P. (2016). The Political-Administrative Design of NPM. In T. Christensen & P. Lægreid (Eds.), *The Ashgate research companion to new public management* (pp. 44–56). Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.

Batley, R. (1999). The new public management in developing countries: introduction. *Journal of International Development*, 11(5), 755–760. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1099-1328(199907/08)11:5<755::AID-JID615>3.0.CO;2-T

Brinkerhoff, D. W., & Brinkerhoff, J. M. (2015). Public Sector Management Reform in Developing Countries: Perspectives Beyond NPM Orthodoxy: Public Sector Management Reform. *Public Administration and Development*, 35(4), 222–237. doi:10.1002/pad.1739

Burnham, P. (2001). New Labour and the politics of depoliticisation. *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations*, 3(2), 127–149.

Drechsler, W. (2005). The rise and demise of the new public management. *Post-autistic economics review*, 14(33), 17–28.

Elias Sarker, A. (2006). New public management in developing countries: An analysis of success and failure with particular reference to Singapore and Bangladesh. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 19(2), 180–203. doi:10.1108/09513550610650437

Fattore, G., Dubois, H. F., & Lapenta, A. (2012). Measuring new public management and governance in political debate. *Public Administration Review*, 72(2), 218–227.

Government Offices of Sweden. (2014, 13). Government Communication 2013/14:131 Aid policy framework - the direction of Swedish aid.

McCourt, W. (2008). Public Management in Developing Countries: From downsizing to governance. *Public Management Review*, 10(4), 467–479. doi:10.1080/14719030802263897

OECD/DAC. (2002). *Glossary of key terms in evaluation and results based management*. Paris: OECD/DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation. Retrieved from http://www.myilibrary.com?id=8108

Rist, G. (2002). *The history of development : from western origins to global faith*. London; New York: Zed Books.

UN. (2015). *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015. Summary*. UN. Retrieved from https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=mgT64OYWYLkC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=%22%E2%80%9Cspare+no+effort+to+free+our+fellow%22+%22to+enable+more+girls+to+attend+school+than%22+%22persist+and+that+progress+has+been%22+%22of+their+age,+disability+or+ethnicity.%22+&ots=eD9iJVs6Bb&sig=Z_PgutKxnCP263w9hze6SjkHQ8M

Previous DDB-reports

2017:09 *Peace and Politics: Promoting Durable Solutions to Communal Conflicts*, Emma Elfversson

2017:08 *Peacemaking up Close: Explaining Mediatior Styles of International Mediatiors*, Mathilda Lindgren

2017:07 *Educating for Peace – a Theological Task in Contemporary Times*, Sara Gehlin

2017:06 *Increasing Access to Abortion*, Susanne Sjöström

2017:05 *The Quest for Maternal Survival in Rwanda – Paradoxes in Policy and Practice*, Jessica Påfs

2017:04 *Effects of violent conflict on women and children. Sexual behaviour, fertility, and infant mortality in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo*, Elina Elveborg Lindskog

2017:03 *Moving upstream: gender norms and emerging sexual experiences in early adolescence*, Anna Kågesten

2017:02 *Strategy for supporting low-income countries in building a midwifery profession*, Malin Bogren

2017:01 *Exporting agrarian expertise: Development Aid at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and its Predecessors, 1950-2009*, Karl Bruno

2016:10 *Beskattning och institutionell kvalitet*, Rasmus Broms

2016:09 *How does China challenge the IMF's power in Africa?* Johanna Malm

2016:08 *Anti-corruption reform – evolution or big bang?* Anders Sundell

2016:07 *Våldsamma hot och priset för ärlighet: En omvärdering av tjänstemäns val att ta mutor*, Aksel Sundström

2016:06 *Women in African Natural Resource Booms*, Anja Tolonen

2016:05 *Beyond the Buzzwords Approach to Gender in Humanitarian Aid*, Elisabeth Olivius

2016:04 *Child Education, Child Labor and the Agricultural Economy*, Elin Vimefall

2016:03 *Path dependent possibilities of transformation: Agricultural change and economic development in north and south Vietnam*, Montserrat López Jerez

2016:02 *The when and why of helping: Individual and organizational decision making from a psychological perspective*, Arvid Erlandsson

2016:01 *Going with the flow or swimming against the current?Interplay of formal rules, informal norms and NGO advocacy strategies*, Yumiko Yasuda

2015:07 *Aiding the End of Conflict? Reintegrating Ex-Combatants in Colombia*, Michael Jonsson

2015:06 *Causes of Communal Conflicts – Government Bias, Elites, and Conditions for Cooperation*, Johan Brosche

2015:05 *Stronger than Justice: Armed Group Impunity for Sexual Violence*, Angela Muvumba Sellström

2015:04 *Public participation in constitution building; an effective strategy for enhancing democracy?* Abrak Saati

2015:03 *Transformative Social Policy in Development? Demystifying Conditional Cash Transfers in Latin America*, Johan Sandberg

2015:02 Aiding *Science. An analysis of Swedish research aid policy 1973 – 2008*, Veronica Brodén Gyberg

2015:01 *Institutional impediments and reluctant actors – the limited role of democracy aid in democratic development*, Agnes Cornell