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Donor Coordinating Mechanisms in the Context of Yemen

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Donor Coordinating Mechanisms in the Context of Yemen

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ABSTRACT:

Aid effectiveness calls for new approaches to development cooperation and a need to adapt funding instruments. As a result, a number of innovative aid delivery mechanisms have surfaced over the past decade. These include: Delegated Cooperation, Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAps), and Pooled Funding. As USAID and other donor agencies ramp up their development support to Yemen, coordinating mechanisms are needed to ensure aid is efficiently and effectively distributed and that economic reforms are carried out.

This paper focuses on the three approaches in the context of aid to Yemen. In addition to a brief description of each model, and good practices and lessons learned are highlighted. Brief examples of each approach in the context of Yemen are given, in addition to other geographic examples.

It should be noted that donor experience in adapting these new aid modalities in a deteriorating context,[1] such as Yemen, is not well documented. A list of relevant resources is also provided.

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[1] OECD has defined "deteriorating" (in its OECD/DAC typology of fragile states contexts) to mean that a country's capacity and/or willingness to perform economic, social, and/or political functions is in decline (with indicators falling). There may be weak rule of law and authoritarian regimes. In some cases, donors may be unwilling to work with the government because of human rights issues. Source: OECD.

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Introduction

In 2006, the fourth Consultative Group meeting of donors for Yemen raised $4.7 billion for the country's development. At the talks, sponsored by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), donor agencies pledged their support of efforts to reduce poverty in Yemen through macroeconomic stability and structural reforms. Funds were to have been disbursed between 2007 and 2010, but the government of Yemen (GoY) has yet to spend most of it – mainly due to bureaucracy, lack of transparency.

As a result of falling oil revenues, a rapidly growing population, extreme water scarcity, and rising insecurity in the north, where ongoing conflict leaves people struggling for basic goods and service, Foreign Minister Abubakr Al Qirbi announced earlier this month that Yemen needs a minimum of $2 billion in aid each year just to "stay afloat;" and $4 billion to turn Yemen's economy around and improve living standards.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said recently that Yemen would have to earn more aid: "it takes a political commitment by Yemen to meet its challenges head on. Yemen's performance has been good at times, but not consistent." There is a high level of fiduciary risk associated with scaling up assistance in a weak institutional environment. A measure was signed recently, however, that will more than double U.S. development aid to Yemen to $63 million, up from $40.3 million in 2009. Consequently, coordinating mechanisms are needed to ensure aid to Yemen is efficiently and effectively distributed and that economic reforms are carried out.

Donor Coordination

Though not a new concept, the topic of aid effectiveness[2] has gained significant traction within the development community over the last decade. Through the Rome Declaration on Harmonization (2003), Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), donor agencies endorse efforts to improve the aid process through better coordination and harmonization of procedures. In complex environments, such as Yemen and other countries that face severe development challenges, it is even more important that donors endorse coordinated international engagement. In 2005, a set of draft "Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations" were developed and piloted in nine countries, including Yemen.[3] The Principles provide guidance for decision making and practice.

Yemen's dedication to aid effectiveness is improving. With the formation of a new government in 2003, it created the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MPIC) to enhance cooperation with regional and international donor agencies and countries. In 2005, the Aid Harmonization and Alignment Unit (AHA) was established under MPIC. Both underscore Yemen's commitment to increasing the effectiveness, as well as enhancing the impact of development assistance, as well as the need and desire to improve relations between GoY and its development partners.

Aid effectiveness calls for new approaches to development cooperation and a need to adapt funding instruments. As a result, a number of operational aid delivery mechanisms have surfaced over the past decade.[4] These include: Delegated Cooperation, Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAps), and Pooled Funding. This paper focuses on the three approaches in the context of aid to Yemen.

Note: donor experience in adapting these new aid modalities within a deteriorating context, such as Yemen, are not well documented.

[2] 'Aid effectiveness' is defined as improving the effectiveness of development aid in achieving economic or human development (or development targets). Source: Kaufman, 2009.
[3] The Principles were approved in 2007 at the DAC High Level meeting.
[4] In addition to policy coordination, which is coordinated primarily by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

Overview of Coordinating Mechanisms

Delegated Cooperation:[5]

A growing number of donors are instituting Delegated Cooperation as part of their development cooperation policies.[6] In general, DC assigns one donor as the decision-making authority on behalf of other donor partners, in terms of fund administration and/or sector policy dialogue with the partner government. The level of authority bestowed upon the lead agency may vary, ranging from responsibility for one element of the project cycle to a complete sector or country program. The lead agency typically is chosen on a case-by-case basis, based on comparative advantages.

Donors agree on the rationale behind DC – to decrease transaction costs (for both donors and partner governments) and to increase aid effectiveness through the utilization of each donor's comparative advantage. DC also enables donors to reserve money for underfunded sectors without the burden of implementing and managing projects and programs. Belgium, a huge proponent of DC, considers it an effective approach in developing an exit strategy, primarily by delegating program implementation to other donors who will remain active in the sectors concerned. In 2006, the Nordic Plus countries[7] reported that identifying indicators to monitor the outcomes of DC (i.e., whether transaction costs are actually lowered) is not viable. However, these countries (and other donors) are working to develop a DC monitoring system.[8]

<u>Good Practices and Lessons Learned</u>:

- The DC model yields an improved division of labor (harmonization), through use of individual donors' comparative advantage, which leads to greater aid effectiveness.
- Donors may choose to rotate leadership of the partnership, which can save time and effort.
- Facilitates a donor's leadership role in a specific sector, as well as aid stability in situations where host government leadership is lacking.
- Working in a DC partnership can ease pressure on existing country teams. Non-lead agencies, for instance, may be relieved of tendering and procurement procedures.
- Success is dependent upon country conditions, political will, and the efforts of all relevant actors.
- Significant advantage is reduced transaction costs.
  - Not all DC partners are willing to remain 'silent,' however, which can cancel out lower costs.
- Legal technicalities may hamper continuation of DC arrangements.
- DC arrangements may actually make aid coordination more complex.
  - May require more engagement than donors anticipate. i.e., DFID found itself repositioned into a more direct supervisory role when in-country technical or project management capacity was weak among DC partners. To cover capacity gaps, DFID funds a livelihoods adviser in Cambodia (via Danida) in support of a DC arrangement on rural development. In Yemen, it established an advisory team at the World Bank to improve poverty analyses and provide technical support to governance processes.
- In the words of one donor, DC "prevent[s} the existence of 'donor darlings' and thus better address[es] 'aid orphans.'
- Partnerships should be based on mutual trust and understanding.
- Increased use of the DC model between bilateral donors makes it important that these arrangements are only pursued when the resulting benefits outweigh the costs of setting it up, and are done so in ways that support, not undermine, partner governments' leadership of the development process.

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[5] Delegated Cooperation is also known as delegated implementation, silent partnerships, and/or co-financing.
[6] EU donors, including Nordic countries, DfID, as well as Canada's CIDA.
[7] Denmark, Finland, Ireland, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and UK.
[8] Most donors do not appear to have developed official criteria for assessing the appropriateness/feasibility of alternative funding mechanisms.

Delegated Cooperation in the Context of Yemen

The GoY has expressed commitment to the creation of effective development partnerships. As such, it supports the application of the DC model as a donor strategy to help the country achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Yemen Maternal and Neonatal Health program:
At least two donors have entered a DC arrangement with the Netherlands (lead partner) on a Maternal and Neonatal Health (MNH) program, in response to the GoY's Reproductive Health Strategy 2006 – 2010. DfID has committed £3.7m (2008-2012), and CyprusAid will contribute €2 million. Since August 2008, the MNH program has been funding diploma courses on newborn care for doctors and nurses based in Governorate Health Facilities, which is anticipated to help reduce the country's neonatal mortality rate from 37 to 25 per 1,000 live births by 2010. In 2008, MNH also trained 182 midwives in Lahaj, Al-Dhale and Taiz governorate, which is expected to contribute to an increase in the proportion of deliveries assisted by skilled birth attendants from 25% to 50% by 2012.

Other DC Examples:

When Sweden began the process of leaving Malawi in 2009, based on the geographical focus of its aid portfolio, there were critical gaps in the coordination of the DC agreement with its lead partner Norway. While most essential areas were covered, some important issues (i.e., visibility of Sweden's contribution, communication to partners of phasing-out scenarios), were not addressed in the agreement. These gaps prevented national stakeholders from designing a strategy to avoid sensible losses. The phase-out plan included only financial and legal aspects of the exit, without detailing possible ways of ensuring a responsible and sustainable process. This situation reveals important lessons on how to jointly implement a delegated exit, highlighting the need for clear communication, particularly in the context of DC. Phasing-out implementation requires a close examination of sustainability by strengthening national capacities and ensuring certain guarantees to avoid negative impact on the national development processes.

A recent agreement between Belgium and DfID assigns half of DFID's land reform program to Belgium (BTC) for implementation over a 2-year period. The main goal is to improve land policies and regulations so they reflect the needs of urban and rural poor. This DC partnership also aims to strengthen the processes and institutions at national and local levels that are mandated to deliver land reform to the landless. Projects implemented collaborate with the private sector and, as a result, reduce duplication and ensure a more efficient use of donor funds.

Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAps)

The SWAps mechanism, developed in the mid- to late-1990s, is based on the realization that fragmented, project-based aid has too little impact and is not sustainable. Ultimately, its aim is to increase the impact of aid by improving its quality and effectiveness. In this approach, emphasis is placed on shared accountability and multi-partner collaboration under the umbrella of host country leadership. While there is no one agreed upon definition of a SWAp, consensus in the literature is that it is a program-based approach that requires a cooperative relationship between host government and development partners. They are now a widely adopted aid modality. Ideally, SWAps involve broad stakeholder consultation in the design and implementation of a coherent sector program at micro-, meso- and macro- levels, and strong coordination among donors and between donors and government. Typically, SWAps encompass broad sectoral coherence – if only one sub-sector is targeted, it is not considered a SWAp. SWAps are a key vehicle for delivery of aid in the health and education sectors; the literature indicates a certain degree of success in these sectors.

Good Practices and Lessons Learned:

- SWAps is an *approach*, not a financial mechanism. It requires a new way of thinking, obliging donors and stakeholders to move beyond the concept of aid delivery to that of effective sector development.

SWAps enable donors to see the big picture when addressing priorities, and offer a conceptual framework that allows for more inclusive participation of stakeholders.

- They shape government policy, strengthen its implementation, and make financing more predictable and flexible.
- A variety of funding arrangements can fit within a SWAp.
- SWAps promote host country ownership.
- There is no blueprint for SWAps development – it is a contextually driven approach.
- Whereas traditional project-based assistance has a defined beginning and end, SWAps embrace a rolling process with continuous planning and implementation.
- SWAps are less successful when used to address crosscutting themes, such as environment, or sectors plagued with disagreement about government's proper role in delivering services, such as agriculture.
- Two prerequisites: 1) systemic orientation, which requires broad sectoral goals and institutional competency, and 2) recipient's willingness to engage with donors at the policy table.
- SWAps do not reduce transaction costs. Rather, expenses increase at first and, although the variety of costs may change, they are likely to continue to be seen as elevated.
- Involving non-state actors is important, regardless of sector – in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, and accountability set-up.
- SWAps should be wide enough to allow for synergy and value-added, but not so wide as to cause management obstacles.
- There is a risk of SWAps 'crowding out' a host country's domestic sector coordination. Careful management is necessary.
- SWAps yield a significant change in both the *direction* and *quality* of accountability relationships. In project-based model, the reporting and accountability framework is biased toward donors' project management needs and reporting. With SWAps, attention is focused on accountability between the host government and its people – the intended beneficiaries.
- Project-based assistance and SWAps complement each other. Experience indicates that donors may pursue both types of assistance, as SWAps do not address all issues facing developing countries.
- Critics say SWAps have the potential to undo gains of vertical programming. Transition from project/program-based aid to SWAps, for instance, can and has caused problems of retaining program performance. This can be attributed to the reorganization of technical responsibilities, rationalization and procurement arrangements, shortages of funding, changes in priorities and changes in government and donor relationships.
- The success of SWAps depends on the capacity and the *willingness* of the host country government to support the design and implementation of effective sector programs
- In this type of arrangement, it is not possible for contributing donors to track exactly how their individual resources are being used.
- It is important to monitor key SWAp principles regularly, such as: the direction and leadership of host government, the host country's main development plan, its commitment to a common review process (reporting and monitoring systems), and efforts to provide external financing so as to increase absorptive capacity.
    - When problems materialize, SWAp partners must look critically at themselves and ensure their attention remains on the core SWAp principles and values.

SWAps in Yemen

Water Sector Support Program (WSSP):

With an arid climate, Yemen faces an imbalance between water supply and demand. As the request of GoY, a water sector SWAp was implemented recently, the WSSP. This is a multi-level approach aligned with Yemen's National Water Sector Strategy and Investment Plan (NWSSIP). Phase II runs July 2009 – June 2012. This SWAp is a collaboration among the World Bank and two bilateral donors (all are core funders): German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the Netherlands. It is anticipated that other donors might commit up to $200 million of joint and parallel financing in support of WSSP

There is a high level of alignment of WSSP's water sector interventions and policy development. Decentralization is seen as key in developing strong water sector organizations in Yemen. Oversight of the SWAp is led by several domestic institutions, including the Ministry of Water and Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, the National Water Resources Authority (NWRA), and other national/local entities. In NWRA, which is an important policy setting and implementing authority, donors have expressed difficulty in collaborating effectively at the program level, primarily due to NWRA's comparative institutional weakness (it is 80% funded by donors). As well, conditions for WSSP in at least one sub-sector (irrigation) are less favorable because policies regarding extraction of groundwater are not well implemented. The Netherlands reports that its partners are citing fiduciary risks as the reason not to embark on higher levels of system alignment.

This SWAp also utilizes pooled funding from the Yemen Social Fund for Development, which is financed by GoY and a variety of donors. Given the water sector's importance to Yemen, political commitment and will are high. GoY provides 80% of the budget for the water sector and is taking on ownership of activities. According to the World Bank, GoY has been proactive in "introduc[ing a] key mechanism of Joint Annual Review (JAR) of NWSSIP to appraise progress made and verify the validity of targets and policies by all sector stakeholders."

Key outcomes between 2003-2008: the water sector in Yemen has progressed and a number of reforms have been implemented. 3.9 million new beneficiaries given access to reliable access to safe drinking water. Total investments in the irrigation sub-sector were $28 million, of which 50% was from donors (NWSSIP necessitates a yearly investment of $38 million). Improved irrigation efficiency reached only 46% of target. Total cost of irrigation improvements was roughly 50% higher than planned.

Other SWAps Examples:
One of the first and oldest SWAps in Asia, the Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Programme (HNPSP) in Bangladesh was launched in 1998 by DfID. Its pooled fund is worth an estimated $4.2 billion. While the program overall has met with success (developing the Bangladeshi government's health policy and supporting its implementation, technically and financially), it is a good example of the strain and fatigue that many SWAps face. According to a recent study, "after initial successes, some of the mature SWAps are losing momentum. Some of the difficulties lie in coping with changes in the complex international aid architecture, where SWAp principles and instruments come under pressure from global initiatives, large scale project aid and vertical interventions."

USAID's experience with SWAps includes working with Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports and the World Bank, Netherlands, Ireland, and the U.K., on a collaborative relationship for a sector program launched in 1999, the Education Sector Investment Program (ESIP). Beginning in1999, USAID and other donors provided Mozambique with targeted budget support aimed at institutional reform of its Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADER). This SWAp was focused on a particular component of a broader sector framework.

Multi-Donor Pooled Funding:

Pooled Funding refers to a situation in which more than one donor agree to contribute to a common fund or basket, thus enhancing both donor coordination and funding continuity. This mechanism is attracting a growing list of participants. Over the past decade, a number of funds have been established, particularly in the area of humanitarian financing. Traditionally, one donor agency assumes responsibility for administering the fund (known as the administrative agent). Supporting partners may be authorized to manage and implement the joint program of activities. The fund typically utilizes a holding account that is reserved for particular purposes; these are agreement upon by the recipient government and participating donors.

This model is seen as lower risk in that transaction costs are reduced due to leveraging of donor resources. USAID's Automated Directive System (ADS) views pooled funding as "a project-financing mechanism whereby funds from multiple donors are commingled in a segregated account by a host government and used to finance specific goods and services in an agreed-upon program."

According to a recent report, pooled funding mechanisms, which include multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs), "provide an aligned and harmonized approach to financing overarching recovery plans (i.e. [Transitional Results Matrices] TRMs). This is particularly the case in transitional settings where the lack of state capacity may prevent direct budget support, but government commitment to peace and development is significant. In low capacity settings, they provide a vehicle through which development and country partners can share priorities and their execution. [pooled funding] can finance the core expenditures of an interim administration. They can mobilise and distribute funds in support of a single national plan and budget, thereby minimising transaction costs to both development and country partners."

Good Practices and Lessons Learned:

- Pooled funds are compatible with the Paris Declaration.
- They permit donors to influence sector-wide policies and programs.
- Funds should be context specific; they require a critical mass of donor support to ensure effectiveness. However, they also allow smaller donors to contribute.
- When donors without in-country presence have confidence in a government, they are more likely to channel their funds through a common pooled fund.
- A major challenge for donors is to balance money provided to a pooled fund with their bilateral portfolio.
- Another key concern with pooled funds is intrinsic weakness in monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up. This makes assessing the benefits of funds difficult.
- The Management Agent is viewed as value-added because this position is not focused on programming, which will mitigate conflicts of interest that could arise during the decision process to allocate funds.

Yemen Social Fund for Development[9]

The SFD was established in 1997 to "improve access to basic social and economic services among poorer segments of the Yemeni population—while also providing an example of an effective, efficient, transparent institutional mechanism by refining social service delivery approaches, supporting local authorities and empowering communities to take charge of their development." The third phase of the SFD (2005 – 2010) is supported by 15 donor agencies (including USAID) who contribute a total of US$300 million. The World Bank is the lead agency, followed by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.[10] One of the SFD's greatest contributions has fostering governance structures at the decentralized and community levels for planning and implementing development initiatives. This, in turn, strengthens relationships between these two levels.

Other Examples:

UNDP's General Pooled Fund (GPF) supports the coordination and facilitation of activities of the Development Assistance Group (DAG) in Ethiopia. Donors include Italy, DFID, Germany, Netherlands, Spain, and SIDA.

Combined Approaches:

As is the case with Yemen's water sector program (WSSP) described above, the SWAPs approach has been used in combination with other coordinated modalities. USAID, for instance, has reported that, "there …exists a wide variety of budget support mechanisms that might be considered in supporting SWAps. The mix of funding mechanisms for any given SWAp does and should vary considerably. This reflects the reality that donors have different strengths, legal and political constraints, and available assets, whether in cash, kind, or technical knowledge, to offer. The U.S., for example, has used a combination of aid delivery mechanisms, including budget support and technical assistance, with positive results in countries such as Uganda and Mozambique."

One example of adapting a funding mechanism to better fit within a country's context involves the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. In 2004, the Fund was integrated into both a health SWAp and a health common fund (Prosaude) in Mozambique. This was the

[9] http://www.sfd-yemen.org/
[10] http://www.arabfund.org/

first time a disease-specific funding mechanism was incorporated into the broader health sector support and pooled funding arrangements. This arrangement was made in order for the government of Mozambique to “take back” control of the national health system.” This is an ongoing process that allows advancement of alignment and harmonization. As a result of the Fund’s success, the World Bank recently followed suite to join the National AIDS Coordinating Council’s pooled fund in Mozambique.

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