

Ownership or Donorship?

Results and ownership in Swedish
international development cooperation

by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is a critical investigation of how the increased demand for results in international development cooperation has influenced relations between donors and partner countries. The increased demand for results, manifested in the so-called results agenda, and partner country ownership are considered key factors to increase effectiveness and efficiency in international development cooperation. There are, however, challenges in how to combine the implementation of the results agenda, which is mainly encouraged by donors, with a development cooperation that is owned and driven by partner countries. The aim of this study is to explore how the results agenda has influenced relations between donors and development partners, and thereby partner country ownership. A factor that complicates the implementation of the results agenda is the lack of a common understanding as regards what qualifies as a result, why results are required, and whose results should be achieved and measured. A central concern of this study has, therefore, been to examine how stakeholders within development cooperation have been framing the results agenda and partner country ownership.

This study gives examples from Swedish development cooperation and Swedish development relationship with Uganda and Mozambique. Semi-structured interviews have been carried out with informants at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sida in Stockholm, and with informants from Sida and development partners in Ugandan and Mozambique. Swedish policies and guidelines on development cooperation have also been analysed to get an overview of how the framing of results and partner country ownership has changed over time.

Development stakeholders have different ways of framing the results agenda, especially as regards the reasons to report results. While the Swedish Government's main reason for implementing the results agenda is to increase accountability, development partners report results mainly for learning purposes. The implementation of the results agenda has altered the relations between development stakeholders by changing their mandates and responsibilities. The Swedish Government has become more involved in the formulation of results requirements, and its mandate to define development objectives has thereby increased. Development cooperation has also become more instrumentalised: protocols and procedures are given priority over the achievement of development objectives. Development partners are responsible for achieving and reporting results in line with protocols decided by donors, which entails that their responsibilities for development failures have increased.

The implementation of the results agenda has thus had a negative effect on partner country ownership. However, this study argues that it should be possible to combine the results agenda and partner country ownership. The concluding discussion addresses the implications of the findings from this thesis and suggests how the results agenda can be reconciled with partner country ownership.

Keywords: international development cooperation, results, partner country ownership, development effectiveness

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