

Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration

Country Evaluation

CAMEROON

Executive Summary

Background, objective and limitations of the evaluation

The Paris Declaration was adopted in 2005, at a time when Cameroon was dealing with an economic crisis that began 20 years earlier and caused it to once again rank among the least developed countries (LDC), a ranking that makes it eligible for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative.

The realisation of this initiative in 2006 gave rise to cancellations, reschedulings and conversions of Cameroon's foreign debt and the establishment of a new Economic and Financial Programme supported by the donor community. Commitments made before and after 2005 by the latter for poverty reduction were not necessarily aiming for the implementation of the Paris Declaration with its own internal logic.

Cameroon did not take part in Phase 1 of the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration conducted in 2006, but was represented at all international meetings on this subject.

Phase 2 of the Evaluation constitutes a study taking stock of the progress made individually or jointly by the various players since Paris and Accra in the implementation of the Aid Agenda. It is being conducted to examine and explain the contribution of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action to aid effectiveness and to the results obtained in terms of development. The results of this evaluation will be used to fuel discussions at the next High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011 in Busan, Korea.

This evaluation is highly appropriate. It primarily aims to shed light on the degree of institutional ownership of the pillars of the Paris Declaration and justify the hope that Cameroon places in its potential to make cooperative relations for its development more consistent and predictable.

Our findings indicate that the application of the Principles of the Paris Declaration is truly underway in Cameroon, albeit slow in terms of the progress objectives set for 2010. We should specify that the 2005-2010 period, i.e., five years, is insufficient to successfully make all of the strategic, systemic and institutional adjustments needed to obtain the fundamental changes sought in the Paris Declaration.

Accordingly, in terms of Ownership, it is difficult to categorically state that it was because of the Paris Declaration that frameworks for dialogue between the government, technical and financial partners and civil society, or public-private partnerships, were included in the formulation of policies and follow-ups on their implementation, as such elements sometimes date back to before 2005. But the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action undeniably contribute specifically to reducing tensions in collaborative relations and reducing mistrust and biases between civil society and the government, enabling them to work with technical and financial partners to achieve the development results for which they are all jointly accountable.

However, applying the principle of Alignment depends on the quality of governance. Indeed, it often takes a long time to complete reforms undertaken by the Government of Cam-

eroon, creating uncertainty and making the management systems and procedures with which the technical and financial partners should comply unclear. In addition, corruption in the management of state funds and in the government contracting system – a phenomenon widely recognised by all players – is an argument presented by technical and financial partners to explain their lack of eagerness to align their processes with these systems.

In terms of Harmonisation, some advances in the coordination of activities by the donor community have been noted, but this practice remains largely undeveloped. The issues of transparency, predictability of aid and the use of programme approaches are real issues on which the government will need to assert its vision and leadership.

For the moment, Results-based Management is a concept reserved for just a handful of insiders in central administrations. Its actual application and generalisation will certainly take some time, unless senior officials in Cameroon develop a true will to intensify training at all institutional levels. It should also become a performance criterion in future negotiations for partnership agreements. The Programme for the Modernisation of Cameroon's Administration through Results-based Management, or "PROMAGAR," is a recent initiative aiming to meet the need to reinforce the administration's effectiveness by instilling a results culture. Formalised in June 2007 through an Order of the Prime Minister, the Head of Government, the main long-term anticipated result is the existence within target administrations of an operational planning, budgeting, follow-up and evaluation mechanism based on results, aligned with the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper and the new State Financial Regime.

Accountability, which is required from all players and accordingly not limited to relations between the technical and financial partners and the Government of Cameroon, can only be mutual if solidarity is clearly expressed in the development of strategies and if there is an explicit agreement for the implementation and follow-up of the actions agreed upon.

The main limitation of this evaluation is the low coverage of the sample targets to be interviewed. Indeed, for reasons associated with the agendas of certain people, the opinions of parliamentarians and economic operators could not be obtained. However, those collected from civil society lacked diversity as the survey only managed to reach a few NGOs and Associations, although it also sought to interview union activists and people associated with the Church.

Based on the framework of objectives and limitations thus identified in the Paris Declaration evaluation process, our main conclusions are as follows.

Main conclusions

The conclusion to be drawn is that the Paris Declaration has still not effectively been implemented in Cameroon. However,

some progress has been made as regards the principles of Ownership, Alignment and Harmonisation. Results-based Management is still in the draft phase within the government, while for now, Mutual Accountability is the concern of civil society. The latter impatiently wants to hold the government and the technical and financial partners to account, entities it holds responsible for the failure of development policies and, more specifically, the delayed implementation of the Paris Declaration – which it sees as a great tool to improve governance.

Accordingly, it can be said that the Paris Declaration process is not only incomplete, but still in its initial stages. In terms of the extent of the anticipated changes, we still have to allow some time for all the players involved to adapt their behaviours. In concrete terms, the aid relation still has not changed, and local and democratic ownership has still not occurred. In other words, aid has not become more abundant and the low absorption capacity has still not balanced out.

However, it is clear that the Paris Declaration has now become a frame of reference for cooperation processes with bilateral partners, and even more so with multilateral partners.

It is important to examine the lessons to be highlighted and the recommendations to be made.

Lessons

The authors of the Paris Declaration and those who adhered to it were very optimistic in their prognosis that the desired results would appear in the short term. They accordingly chose 2010 as a goal for the achievement of most target objectives, almost certainly to be in line with the Millennium Development Goals agenda, in which targets have been set for 2015. It is now 2010 and Cameroon does not seem to have achieved the first commitment associated with Ownership.

The Paris Declaration is more of a political process than a technical one, and this evaluation revealed that there is still work to be done to achieve either one. However, it is quite clear that political will is the key factor influencing the achievement of the desired changes, but the public administration also has a significant share of the responsibility as the holder of the techniques and skills needed to plan, programme, negotiate and manage consolidated public resources.

Analysing the aid effectiveness issue is accordingly a very complex exercise, because it mobilises players who neither have the same vision, understanding, objectives or even the same intervention tools, on either a strategic, economic or social level.

The disparity of the information collected from various sources and the points of view obtained in the interviews conducted demonstrate just how sensitive the issue is and how difficult it is to disseminate the opinions of all involved.

The analysis showed that the evaluation of aid to Cameroon seems to concern the technical and financial partners more than the recipients, which explains the absence of specific information and statistical series at the national and decentralised levels, which could have made it easier to analyse the results and formulate an objective assessment.

Consequently, the institutional integration of the Paris Declaration remains limited and the systemic and managerial capacities of aid still need to be developed, making an in-depth reform of the strategic, organisational and instrumental process of aid to Cameroon desirable.

Recommendations

It is important that Cameroon define its development co-operation policy and take charge of funding strategies and mechanisms by adapting them to its economic and social effectiveness. To this end, it should:

- Base its leadership on Development Aid policies and management by defining a framework for development partnerships along with all the instruments needed to plan, follow up and evaluate the resources mobilised
- Strengthen institutional ownership of the Paris Declaration through a player communication, information and documentation programme
- Reinforce good governance measures and the institutional capacity to manage aid
- Make sure the gender issue is taken into account in the interventions of the technical and financial partners
- Implement a gender integration project in the Paris Declaration, including follow-up indicators with the support of the technical and financial partners
- Clarify the conditions for access to alternative sources of funding (South-South Cooperation) and the anticipated benefits.