OECD DAC GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON
MANAGING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

More than ever, development actors are called upon to join efforts and maximise the impact of individual and collective interventions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Guiding Principles on Managing for Sustainable Development Results (MfSDR) help development organisations navigate complex development co-operation and humanitarian challenges to reach their expected results and support sustainable development effectively. They set a renewed practice in results-based management in development co-operation that builds on the Managing for Development Results (MfDR) principles that were endorsed by development agencies at the international roundtable on results in Marrakech (February 2004). These new principles reflect the changing context for development co-operation and the broader set of actors involved, and help organisations to address the recurrent challenges they have been facing in practice.

The Guiding Principles on Managing for Sustainable Development Results are aspirational and should serve as a reference point. They guide development organisations in setting up or refining results-based management approaches that are fit for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Guiding Principles will also help to support institutional change and promote a culture of results. While they provide a framework applicable by all development organisations, public and private, at any level and across a variety of interventions, the operationalisation of the Guiding Principles should be interpreted in the context of each organisation, and adapted depending on their mandate and organisational complexity.

While recognising that development is a complex undertaking, it is expected that through applying these principles, development organisations will contribute better to sustainable development results, becoming more efficient and effective in collecting and using data for steering and learning,

alongside accountability and communication purposes. It is also expected that applying the principles will lead to more efficient and harmonised results systems, conducive to more collaborative approaches. As a result, development organisations will maximise the effects of their individual and collective interventions on sustainable development, to the benefit of all communities in partner countries including those left behind.

The six Guiding Principles build on the MfDR principles and incorporate principles that have been adopted since 2004, including the principles for effective development co-operation agreed in Busan in 2011. The first three principles set the direction while the three others focus on the organisational set-up for MfSDR. The principles are closely inter-related, and each principle should be read and applied in connection with the others.

The Guiding Principles are accompanied by a brief description of key elements to explain and help operationalise them. A guidance note providing more information on how the principles can be applied at the corporate, portfolio, thematic, country, programme and project levels of institutions, as well as at the national level, clarifying the concepts, identifying interdependencies and comprising a set of good practices will be developed in the short term. It will show the variety of tools and strategies that countries, development agencies and private actors can use. Together with the principles, this guidance note will form a handbook for practitioners of results-based management in development co-operation.

The OECD/DAC Results Community will share practices related to the implementation of the Guiding Principles on a regular basis. Guiding Principles will be subject to an independent evaluation in the medium term to assess how they are understood and used, and to what effect.

PRINCIPLE 1.   **Support sustainable development goals and desired change**

PRINCIPLE 2.   **Adapt to context**

PRINCIPLE 3   **Enhance country ownership, mutual accountability and transparency**

PRINCIPLE 4.   **Maximise the use of results information for learning and decision-making**

PRINCIPLE 5.   **Foster a culture of results and learning**

PRINCIPLE 6.   **Develop a results system that is manageable and reliable**

PRINCIPLE 1. SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND DESIRED CHANGE

Managing for Sustainable Development Results (MfSDR) approaches should maximise the impact of efforts towards achieving social, economic and environmentally sustainable development that leaves no-one behind.

KEY ELEMENTS

- MfSDR supports the achievement of sustainable development outcomes. The results system is inherently linked to the ultimate objective of development policy and contributions to achieving agreed-upon global or national development frameworks, in particular the 2030 Agenda including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the pledge to leave no-one behind, as well as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

- Development organisations set for themselves clear expected results measured by indicators aligned to the SDGs, and design and apply flexibly sound methodologies at corporate, portfolio, country, sector, programme and project levels to achieve these results.

- Development organisations mainstream results-based management across all dimensions of management and related decision making, spanning strategic management, operational and change management processes, partnerships, and performance and knowledge management. Recognising the evolving and complex nature of development, development organisations promote adaptability and emphasise learning.

- Wherever relevant, development organisations promote coherent, cross-sector and cross-disciplinary approaches and incorporate them into measurement, learning and reporting systems, in line with the integrated approach of the SDGs.

PRINCIPLE 2. ADAPT TO CONTEXT

MfSDR systems, methods and approaches should be flexible to allow for tailoring to different operational contexts, modalities of engagement, and types of partnerships.

KEY ELEMENTS

- Recognising that development is a complex undertaking involving many different actors and confronted with volatile and uncertain situations, development organisations tailor their approach to the various partnerships and modalities of engagement, and adapt to each partner country context and local change processes. They also need to be flexible enough to adjust to rapidly evolving situations.

- Development organisations seek a balanced approach between compliance with internal requirements and empowerment at ground level. Managers have the authority and flexibility to tailor the management approach depending on the type of engagement and local context.

- Development organisations focus on achieving long-term outcomes rather than only on short-term deliverables. Depending on the circumstances, managers can adapt the deliverables and arrange resources as required to achieve the desired outcomes. This requires a sound understanding of the local dynamics, clear outcomes and adaptable outputs. Iterative (rather than linear) approaches might be adopted to address the complexity of the operational environment. Processes are documented to monitor progress and facilitate learning.

PRINCIPLE 3. ENHANCE COUNTRY OWNERSHIP, MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

MfSDR approaches should foster development effectiveness by strengthening and using partner countries' systems for strategic planning, monitoring and statistics, and promoting participatory approaches to enhance ownership, mutual accountability and transparency.

KEY ELEMENTS

- At partner country level, development organisations align their indicator framework to partner country results frameworks, prioritising national indicators that are aligned to the SDGs. They synchronise planning cycles with partner countries' own cycles and harmonise their respective results frameworks to minimise costs and avoid duplications.

- Development organisations strengthen and maximise use of partner countries' monitoring and statistical systems, enhancing national capacity to plan and develop results frameworks as well as to produce and analyse data, including disaggregated data to capture results related to populations left behind.

- Trust and mutual learning among partners at country and sub-national levels are valued. Dialogue among partners and participatory approaches supporting locally-led problem solving are promoted. Broad involvement – supported by appropriate capacity building – is sought in problem analysis, design, planning, monitoring, evaluation and use of results to foster broad-based ownership and ensure sustainability.

- Development organisations foster mutual accountability when engaging in partnerships, with a clear understanding of the common goal and each parties' contribution to achieving shared outcomes and sharing risks, while regularly assessing the effectiveness of the partnership.

- Development organisations promote transparency, sharing their results frameworks, and ensuring that results information and data are available to all involved stakeholders and the broader public – including to specific target groups with understandable language and appropriate communication channels.

PRINCIPLE 4. MAXIMISE THE USE OF RESULTS INFORMATION FOR LEARNING AND DECISION-MAKING

While responding to communication and accountability needs, results information should systematically be used for learning and decision-making in order to improve delivery and enhance impact.

KEY ELEMENTS

- Results information, which includes quantitative and qualitative data and evidence from both monitoring and evaluation, is used for learning and decision-making at every level - ranging from corporate to project level - alongside its use for communication and accountability.

- The purpose and ways in which results information is used are clearly specified. This includes in particular how management, staff and partners use data for:

  – Steering and learning:

    » Steering the development co-operation programme and allocating resources strategically to enhance effectiveness and impact

- » Adapting the implementation of a programme to evolving situations

- » Learning what works and what does not work at project, portfolio and policy levels, and make changes where needed.

  - – Communication: communicating on the programme, at different levels, and to various audiences at national and partner country level to raise awareness, build public trust in development co-operation and mobilise citizens into action for the SDGs.

  - – Reporting and accountability: providing feedback to domestic stakeholders and partners on achievements, what has been learned, and challenges of the programme.

- Whether the interventions are successful or not, organisations and their partners use results information to foster learning and to support constructive and proactive management decision making.

PRINCIPLE 5. FOSTER A CULTURE OF RESULTS AND LEARNING

A culture of results should be promoted and sustained through consistent leadership, and supported by appropriate guidance, tools and capacity building as well as proper incentives.

KEY ELEMENTS

- Leadership widely communicates the purpose of and drive behind results-based management. It uses results information effectively for programme management at the corporate level and strategically for policy influencing at a political level.

- Leadership promotes a results and learning culture within the development organisation and with partners, supported by appropriate guidance and tools on how to manage for sustainable development results. It allocates appropriate resources to support the effective implementation of the results approach.

- Promoting a corporate results and learning culture also requires a sound and coherent change management process, focusing on strengthening capacity of both providers and partners' systems; ensuring enough space for analysis of results information and peer learning on both successes and failures; and providing tailored incentives to design results frameworks, collect data, report both positive and negative results, and use results information adequately to adapt and improve programme interventions.

- Careful experimentation in support of innovation is valued as a way to foster better results.

PRINCIPLE 6. DEVELOP A RESULTS SYSTEM THAT IS MANAGEABLE AND RELIABLE

While providing credible results information that can be used by all partners, results frameworks, measurement and reporting systems need to be suitable to each organisation's needs and capacities.

KEY ELEMENTS

- Results management is developed in a straightforward way, with a balance between simplicity and utility. The system focuses on key results indicators, ensures clear purpose for any data that is collected and supports effective communication between stakeholders while minimising reporting burden.

- Monitoring and evaluation systems are set up to produce credible quantitative and qualitative evidence that meets the needs and capacities of the development organisation and its partners. Appropriate feedback mechanisms to both policy-makers, operational staff and partners help to ensure that findings are used at the appropriate level to improve delivery, learn, and shape strategy and decision-making.

- Information systems support the collection, aggregation, analysis, and sharing of results information. Systems are digitalised as appropriate, and data confidentiality is protected by clear protocols. Providers' efforts to grow data systems must be co-ordinated to ensure connectivity between systems. Meanwhile appropriate attention is kept to ensure that qualitative results information is collected and processed.

- Keeping the system manageable, reliable and adaptable is a continuous effort that requires on-going capacity building at all levels. The system is reviewed on a regular basis, including the quality and use of the results information that is generated, in order to improve the system gradually, and maintain it as fit for purpose, user-friendly and lean.