**Executive Summary**

**I. Purpose, Background and Approach**

1. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness,[[1]](#footnote-1) endorsed in 2005, is a landmark international agreement and programme of reform - the culmination of several decades of attempts to improve the quality of aid and its impacts on development. This Report is an independent global evaluation of these efforts to improve the effectiveness of international aid, especially since 2005.
2. The Evaluation results – findings, conclusions and recommendations - are aimed at government ministers, legislators, aid administrators and other specialized users, as well as to wider publics with an interest in development and aid. The Evaluation is important both for accountability and to point the way for future improvements. The underlying stakes are huge: better lives for billions of people (reflected in the approaching Millennium Development Goals for 2015); hundreds of billions of dollars expended; vital international relationships; and growing demands to see results from development aid.
3. As a fully joint Evaluation, this has been a major international effort in itself, comprising more than 50 studies in 22 partner countries and across 18 donor agencies, as well as several studies on special themes. It has taken place over four years, in two phases between 2007 and 2011. The overall results are distilled in this synthesis report, but the underlying studies are also vital references for both national and international audiences.
4. The Evaluation responds to three main questions:
5. What are the factors that have shaped and limited the implementation of the Declaration reforms and their effects? (The Paris Declaration in Context)
6. What improvements have been made in aid effectiveness as targeted in the Declaration? (Contributions to Aid Effectiveness)
7. What contributions have improvements in aid effectiveness made to sustainable development results? (Contributions to Development Results)
8. *Methodology.* The Evaluation[[2]](#footnote-2) analyses whether and how the commitments, actors and incentives brought together by the Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action[[3]](#footnote-3) have delivered their statement of intent. It traces the logic of how the Declaration is supposed to work and illustrates the complex pathways from development objectives to results. This highlighted the other powerful influences at work in the development process, and the realistic limits on the role of aid. Recognizing that development is a journey, the methodology focuses on assessing the *direction of travel* on each key point, and the *pace and distance* travelled so far. Multiple sources of evidence and techniques - mainly qualitative but also drawing upon reliable quantitative data where available - were used to provide and validate answers and to reach judgements.
9. *Limitations.* There have been special challenges in evaluating the effects of a wide-ranging initiative like the Declaration, and the Evaluation acknowledges several limitations. These include:

* the unusual type of evaluation object;
* the broad and complex goals of the Declaration and the wide variety of contexts and actors involved;
* the limited time since the Declaration was endorsed in 2005, especially to trace results for development;
* the voluntary nature of participation in the evaluations and studies;
* the less in-depth coverage of donor/agency performance than in the country evaluations; and
* the uneven use of standard sets of data sources or rating scales.

1. In almost every area, the results are varied across countries and donors/agencies. Given a topic as challenging and diverse as this, no synthesis could hope to capture the full wealth of information, insights and assessments in the individual reports on which it is based. The individual evaluation processes are already contributing to aid reforms in the countries and agencies where they have been conducted. The detailed findings, conclusions and recommendations of these individual reports also merit wide national and international attention. Their executive summaries are annexed to this Report, and the full texts are available in the enclosed CD-ROM.

**II. Main Findings**

**1. The Declaration in Context**

1. *The Declaration has proved relevant to many different countries and donors/agencies.* All were already engaged in aid reforms before 2005, but to differing degrees. The Evaluation highlights the main political, economic and bureaucratic influences that have shaped and limited implementation. One challenge to the relevance of the Declaration campaign[[4]](#footnote-4) was that it was initially interpreted and applied as a technical, bureaucratic process, and risked losing the political and wider societal engagement needed to bring change. It has also had to grapple with how to define and measure ‘aid’ in a rapidly changing world.
2. As recent global events have driven home, recession, financial, food, fuel or other crises and major disasters can have dramatic effects on international cooperation and reform processes. But even in ‘normal’ times, in every aid-receiving and donor country, aid programmes are subject to different influences, actors, forces and events that are more powerful than the direct objectives, interests and resources of aid programmes themselves. There is no single way of assessing a country’s relative reliance or ‘dependency’ on aid. The effects of these diverse contexts emerge repeatedly in the individual reports within the Evaluation, together with larger questions about the changing views of the nature and the importance of aid itself.
3. *Contexts for partner countries****.*** Country evaluations have found that, with the exception of some ‘early starters’, the reforms for which partner countries are responsible have been slow to take hold since 2000–2005, but have now done so in most cases. The Evaluation finds that countries have employed and embedded the Declaration-style improvements, not just to manage aid better but because they serve the countries’ national needs, for example to introduce better financial management, public procurement or accountability. The momentum of change has been sufficiently resilient to hold up through political changes and crises of various kinds.
4. *Contexts for donor countries*. In comparison with partner countries, the aid reform changes asked of donor countries under the Declaration are less demanding and the donors’/agencies’ capacities for implementing change are greater. But development aid and aid reform have to compete for political and public attention with an even wider range of domestic and international issues in donor countries, making it harder to muster the necessary political, bureaucratic and public attention and support. Some key constraints found in the donor/agency institutional studies were: a lack of coherent policies or structures; a focus on compliance and a risk-averse culture; the overcentralization of many donors’/agencies’ systems and decisions running counter to alignment with country systems; disconnects between corporate strategies and the aid effectiveness agenda and weak organisational incentives; changes in organisational status or headquarters location; capacity constraints and staff reductions; and delayed organisational reforms and budgetary pressures arising from the financial crisis.

**2. Contributions to Aid Effectiveness**

1. To determine whether aid effectiveness has been improved, the Evaluation has assessed the progress made against the 11 intended outcomes that were specified in the opening paragraphs of the Declaration itself. The record of progress on each of these changes, how difficult they are and who is mainly responsible is provided in Chapter 3 and summarised in Figure 5. Overall, the Declaration campaign has made several significant[[5]](#footnote-5) differences to aid effectiveness by clarifying and strengthening norms of good practice, contributing to movement toward the 11 outcomes set in 2005, improving the quality of aid partnerships, and supporting rising aid volumes.
2. The Declaration has pulled together and focused global attention on ambitious, experience-based measures to improve development cooperation and aid. It addresses a range of problems that were 50 years in the making, and holds out a vision of much better conditions for aid and ultimately for development without aid. While recognizing that the challenges could not all be rapidly resolved, it has focused on a very short, five-year time frame for measurable or visible improvements. Not all of these targets were realistic, or even reliably measurable, but the Evaluation finds that its principles and commitments have been applied, if gradually and unevenly, among partner countries and more unevenly among donors/agencies.
3. In a changing world of development cooperation, the specific importance of ‘aid’ and better aid has been clarified. Even with an understanding of the other influences that shape development, the complexities involved in managing and improving aid relationships, and the availability of other forms and sources of development resources, an unprecedented number of partner countries and donors/agencies have been prepared to invest substantial efforts in improvement.
4. The Declaration campaign has made several specific differences, for example by:

* clarifying and strengthening good practice in aid relationships and thus legitimizing and reinforcing higher mutual expectations;
* contributing to movement, although sometimes slow and modest, towards most of the 11 outcomes set out in 2005, and in the process making some contributions to better development results;
* playing a role, probably in combination with the awareness-raising effects of the Millennium Development Goals, in supporting rising aid volumes; and
* improving the quality of a number of aid partnerships, based on strengthening levels of transparency, trust and partner country ownership.

Seen through another lens, the Declaration was aimed at improving effectiveness in three areas: the efficiency of aid delivery, the management and use of aid, and better partnerships.

Overall, the picture on **efficiency** gains is mixed, but so far disappointing in relation to the original hopes of rapidly reduced burdens in managing aid. There has been generally little reduction to date in those burdens where Declaration-style cooperation has been applied - and even increased loads are noted in a few cases. At the same time, many Declaration-style mechanisms and practices are allowing for a much better overview of aid by the partner country and donors. When matched by sufficiently robust country systems, they have increased the country ability to handle more strategic support, particularly at the sectoral level.

While progress is slow and uneven, the **management and use of aid** has improved in the countries studied, especially in relation to the pre-Declaration situation, and Declaration-style aid appears to have made significant contributions to that change. Global programmes are found to be still mainly insufficiently integrated with other processes, but in some cases considered to be delivering stronger development results.

In terms of **building more inclusive and effective partnerships for development**, aggregate standards are rising. The Declaration has placed an explicit focus on aid relationships, and opened up important dialogues about partnerships themselves - between countries and donors, donors and donors, and with other stakeholders, rather than just the technical or financing aspects of managing aid. A number of clear practical benefits are already being felt.

1. *For partner countries*. The changes expected have been more demanding than those expected of donors/agencies. Despite this, most partner countries evaluated have now embedded many of these change processes, not just to manage aid better but because they serve the countries’ national needs. The complex, long-term challenges of capacity development are the most important constraints for most countries, and these do not allow for ‘quick fixes’ or bureaucratically engineered solutions. However, partner countries can do more to identify priorities for strengthening capacities in targeted areas. Donors/agencies in turn can do more to support those priorities in coordinated ways, to strengthen country systems by using them and to reduce donor practices that undermine the development of sustainable capacity.
2. *For donors and agencies*. With a number of striking exceptions, donors/agencies have so far demonstrated less commitment than partner countries to making the necessary changes in their own systems. Some have been too uncoordinated and risk averse to play their expected proactive part in the relationship. Most donors/agencies have set high levels of partner country compliance as preconditions for their own reforms rather than moving together reciprocally and managing and sharing risks realistically. Peer pressure and collective donor action are not yet embedded in many donor country systems, so that they are left vulnerable to uninformed policy changes, for example when governments or ministers change.
3. The country reports often point to the greater freedom of multilateral agencies to apply some good practices – for example in making multi-year aid commitments - and the relative insulation of these agencies from short-term political pressures. Overall, however, the Evaluation had only limited multilateral participation.[[6]](#footnote-6) Consequently, it cannot assess systematically the relative performance of multilateral agencies in implementing the Declaration and improved aid practices.

**3. Contributions to Development Results**

1. The Evaluation concentrated on assessing the possible contributions of aid reforms to sustainable development in four areas: in specific sectors (particularly in health, the common study sector); in giving priority to the needs of the poorest; in strengthening institutional capacities and social capital; and in improving the mix of aid modalities.
2. Significant positive contributions can be traced, particularly in the case studies in the health sector, to more focused aid efforts and better development results. The pathways for these contributions are indirect but clear. In other areas assessed – such as giving higher priority to the needs of the poorest - aid and aid reform have been able to make little difference to development gains in the face of powerful obstacles. A number of the gains made are likely to be sustainable, while others remain fragile
3. A strong cross section of the country evaluations found evidence that Declaration type measures, launched either before or since 2005, but reinforced since then, have contributed to more focused, efficient and collaborative aid efforts, particularly at the sectoral level. These evaluations then found plausible evidence that those efforts had already contributed to better development results, with good prospects of being sustainable. The strongest evidence of this effect is in the health sector, examined in most depth in the country evaluations. Beyond this ‘tracer’ sector, this Evaluation does not have sufficient evidence to track contributions of aid reforms to wider development results such as accelerating achievement of the other Millennium Development Goals.
4. Although insufficient capacity remains a formidable obstacle in many countries and aid could help more than it does, there is evidence that aid and aid reform have made at least some contributions to the long-term strengthening both of institutional capacities for development and of social capital.
5. On the whole, there has been little progress in most countries in giving greater priority to the needs of the poorest people, particularly women and girls. However, there is evidence of some positive contributions by aid and some value added by reforms and Declaration-style operations since 2000–2005. This disconnect drives home the essential precondition of a powerful and sustained national commitment to change. Without this in place, aid and aid reforms are limited in their capacity to address entrenched inequalities
6. A wider range of options and innovations with aid modalities, particularly more joint donor/agency support at the sectoral level, has improved actual or potential contributions to development results in half the evaluation countries since 2000–2005. However, no single modality (e.g. budget or sector support, programmes or projects) will automatically produce better development results, and a mix of aid modalities has continued to make sense for all partner countries and donors/agencies.

**4. Conclusions**

1. The principles and commitments in the Declaration, based as they are on the experience of partner countries and donors/agencies, have almost all proved relevant to improving the quality of aid and of the partnerships needed to make it work. The ways in which the Declaration has been implemented have sometimes strained its relevance, but it remains unbroken, and has shown the resilience to withstand considerable change and turbulence. A number of shortcomings and unintended effects of the Declaration approach have been identified[[7]](#footnote-7) and reflected in recommendations for future action.
2. Comparing current practice with the aid situation 20 to 25 years ago presents a global picture of far greater transparency and far less donor-driven aid today. The ‘free-for-alls’ of competitive, uncoordinated and donor-driven activities that were commonplace at that time are now unusual enough to attract rapid attention and criticism. Comparing with the immediate pre-2005 situation, the Declaration campaign has spread commitments and instruments for reform which were previously being developed and tested in a fragmentary way. The Declaration has raised expectations for rapid change, perhaps unrealistically, but also strengthened agreed norms and standards of better practice and partnership. There is ample evidence here that these standards have been used to reinforce or legitimize demands – especially from partner countries - that good practice be observed.
3. Overall the Evaluation finds that of the five principles, country ownership has advanced farthest, with alignment and harmonisation progressing more unevenly, and managing for development results and mutual accountability advancing least. The implications of this are reflected in key messages and recommendations.
4. The Evaluation concludes that the changes made by the Declaration have not yet reduced the overall burdens of aid management as hoped. However, they have contributed to a better quality of aid, to more transparent and effective partnerships, and to supporting rising volumes of aid. Those cases identified where management burdens have been increased by introducing Declaration-style aid, such as multi-donor funds do not outweigh these wider benefits.
5. In contrast with improvements in aid covered by the Declaration, the Evaluation finds a critical lack of transparency and of reliable data on many of the other forms and flows of cooperation beyond the current scope of the Declaration. With these actors disbursing about one-quarter[[8]](#footnote-8) as much aid as OECD/DAC donors/agencies currently, the major advances in the Declaration and Accra Agenda which address transparency, aid effectiveness criteria and mutual accountability must be applied and advanced to include them.
6. Assumptions about the potential role of aid remain exaggerated, particularly in donor countries. Expectations for rapid, fundamental reforms by partner countries have also been unrealistic and unreasonable, especially alongside the record of most donors/agencies. A wider perspective and a sense of proportion will be needed to carry aid effectiveness reforms to their full potential. Both partner countries and donors/agencies will also need to foster and harness better the many more powerful forces and policies for development that lie beyond the realm of aid.

**5. Key Recommendations**

1. The overall and detailed findings and conclusions in this Synthesis Report open up many possible ideas for further improving aid effectiveness, drawn from the experience of implementing the Paris Declaration. This section highlights the most important recommendations emerging for the main stakeholders, together with the brief rationale and basis for them. A number of these main recommendations are clearly not new -some are both familiar and seemingly obvious. These key political actions must be pressed again - simply and starkly - both because they are so important and because they are also areas where donors/agencies and/or partner countries have so far failed to meet their firm Paris and Accra commitments.
2. *Relevance to other actors not specifically addressed below*: The main focus in this Evaluation has been on aid reform actions since 2000-2005 by partner countries and donors and agencies which had endorsed the Paris Declaration in those capacities. At the same time, the country evaluations and other work have re-confirmed the conclusions of the Accra High Level Forum about the importance of the roles in development and aid of a growing number of other actors and types of cooperation.
3. Furthermore, important evidence has emerged in the Evaluation on the work of: national and international civil society organisations; providers of concessional finance that have not yet endorsed the Declaration in that capacity (governments, global programmes, and private sector actors); as well as participants in regional, South-South, triangular and other forms of development cooperation, including investment, which may or may not involve concessional resource transfers. Several of these groups of actors have been engaged in parallel effectiveness efforts, and in the case of civil society organisations, have undertaken to report at the Busan Forum. It would greatly enhance the value of this global forum if others were to participate fully as well.
4. In the meantime, while it is beyond the mandate of this Evaluation to recommend specific actions to other groups, it is important to stress that the evidence strongly indicates that all the recommendations below are relevant to all these other actors. They will bring their own perspectives and experience to any wider global discussions, but the evidence is clear that without their engagement and cooperation, the benefits of aid and aid reforms to developing countries will be greatly reduced. There are also some important areas identified where their own work would clearly benefit from the recommendations emerging from this Evaluation.

**To policymakers in both partner countries and donor countries and agencies**

***Recommendation 1. Make the hard political choices and follow through***

1. The High Level Forum in Korea needs to find innovative ways to re-enlist and maintain high level political engagement to take stock of experience, resolve hard issues and set future directions.
2. The Evaluation has repeatedly found that the key driver for successful reform in countries and donor agencies has been high level political engagement and support. Its absence may be one of the crucial reasons for lagging progress elsewhere. The agenda for the Busan High Level Forum needs to be non-bureaucratic and focused on political choices to attract and engage both experienced and new leaders, including those from countries and agencies not yet part of the Declaration coalition. It also needs to launch innovative ways of maintaining stronger political engagement *between* Forums in the continuing reform work on the ground.

***Recommendation 2*. *Focus on transparency, mutual accountability and shared risk management***

1. The next phase of reforms to strengthen the effectiveness of aid should build on the gains of the Paris Declaration campaign and learn from it by going beyond the global banner of the ‘grand declaration’ to concentrate on the most needed changes:

* deepening adherence to the principles of country ownership, alignment and harmonisation of donor support, and transparency and mutual accountability in tracking and achieving results;
* adding ‘shared risk management’ to this framework of principles; and
* focusing mainly on country-led, coordinated action on the ground.

1. Transparency has emerged repeatedly throughout the Evaluation as the indispensable foundation for effectiveness and mutual accountability. Adding shared risk management as a guiding principle will openly acknowledge that there are many uncertainties and risks in development and in partnerships. It will also express a mutual commitment to confront and manage risks and disagreements jointly, in the spirit of a mature partnership. Managing for development results should be further targeted and treated as a set of supporting techniques rather than a separate principle in itself.

***Recommendation 3. Centre and reinforce the aid effectiveness effort in countries***

1. Leadership in future aid effectiveness efforts needs to be clearly situated and supported at the level of individual partner countries, with stronger country-led mechanisms and independent facilitation as a widely used option. At the international level, the superstructure of standard setting, analysis, reporting and monitoring on aid effectiveness needs to be less onerous and more directly useful.
2. The dominant findings of this Evaluation are that the main aid reform principles and commitments of the Declaration are applicable to all forms of international aid, but that the weighting, priorities and timeframes for different reforms need to be adapted to the wide diversity of situations found in different countries. Development co-operation and aid reforms now need to return to their foundations, and re-apply their focus at the country level, taking the next step from the top-down style of much of the reform campaign since 2005. With the weight shifting to partnerships at the country level, the elaborate and demanding work-programme at the international level should be reduced to concentrate on a small number of essential tasks.
3. This country focus will clearly situate and apply aid reforms in their real-world context and strengthen ownership, transparency and mutual accountability in their most relevant place. Annual country-level forums, with the participation of all key stakeholders, should be reinforced as the centrepiece of a continuing system of shared information, mutual performance review, wider participation and consultation, commitment to priorities and targets, alignment and harmonisation.
4. These functions should be backed by countries’ own strong mechanisms to track and manage aid partnerships. Key quantitative targets and timeframes for reforms and performance should be selected, set and agreed at the country level. The negotiation of longer-term aid agreements between the partner country and all its donors/agencies should follow from these efforts and lead to much-needed improvements in the coordination and predictability of aid.
5. To help resolve the widespread deficit in mutual accountability and the genuine challenges in making it work, all countries should have the option of calling on independent facilitator/rapporteurs to monitor and help steer these processes. Objective individuals or small panels could make a major difference, working with the country participants and the donor community, drawing on the norms of good practice and providing their independent input to the annual forums and international reporting systems to support stronger mutual accountability.

***Recommendation 4. Work to extend the aid reform gains to all forms of development cooperation***

1. The unprecedented coalition in the international campaign for more effective aid and the most important improvements achieved need to be further widened to engage other forms of aid and other actors with their own approaches and innovations.
2. Not all the new or growing forms of development cooperation have an aid component, and the proven norms should not be over-extended or watered down to try to go beyond aid. But, with a modest number of refinements and adaptations where they are shown to be needed, almost all of the 56 commitments of the Declaration have proven valid and useful as basic norms and disciplines[[9]](#footnote-9) in virtually all forms of international support for development that have a concessional or grant element**.** This includes cooperation in fragile and humanitarian situations, new forms of support such as climate change financing, and the concessional development cooperation of providers now working outside the Declaration framework and parts of civil society, regional, South-South and ‘triangular’ cooperation.

***Recommendation 5. Reinforce the improved international partnerships in the next phase of reforms***

1. For the future, it will be vital to build upon the important advances that have been made at the international level through purpose-built joint partnership mechanisms between partner countries and donors/agencies to pursue the Paris Declaration reform campaign. There must also be sufficient international processes and accountability requirements for continuing improvements.
2. For any new international processes for future aid effectiveness efforts, the key foundation must be a firm base of transparency on all financing and activities at both the international and national levels. With the proposed sharper focus on action in partnerships at the country level, the most important *international* need will be for more common purpose and demanding expectations on donors/agencies, whose activities span many different countries.

**To policymakers in partner countries**

***Recommendation 6. Take full leadership and responsibility at home for further aid reforms in their own countries***

1. Partner countries need to take on the full leadership and responsibility for further improvement in aid effectiveness in their own countries. This should be built on consistent engagement at senior political levels, stronger in-country machinery for engaging and coordinating donors/agencies and a clear option of involving independent facilitator/rapporteurs to help monitor progress and support mutual accountability.
2. A solid focus on aid reform at the country level, where the most relevant reforms for the country’s own needs and capacities can be emphasized, is likely to lead to more effective aid and increased chances of better development results. All the stakeholders, including legislatures, civil society and the private sector, can be more involved. The evidence is that most donors/agencies endorsing the Declaration will be prepared to rally behind clear country leadership, although some of their systems are not yet equipped to field the necessary authority, expertise and continuity on the ground. An aid effectiveness system more grounded in countries will need to work for higher standards of mutual accountability for performance and commitments. Because of the asymmetrical and complex relationships of an aid-receiving country dealing with multiple donors/agencies on difficult issues, there may often be a role for an objective third party to help facilitate the relationships and the processes at key points. Such arrangements have been used to good effect in the past. This is the rationale for the recommendation that all countries have the option of calling on independent facilitator/rapporteurs to monitor and facilitate these aid management and reform processes.

***Recommendation 7. Set strategies and priorities for strengthening capacities***

1. Most partner countries need to craft workable strategies for further strengthening the capacities to carry through their most essential public policies and operations. This would produce clearer priorities to steer the donor support that is pledged for this purpose.
2. The Evaluation has found that capacity constraints are the most prevalent source of difficulties in completing aid reforms and, even more important, for carrying out the essential functions that aid is intended to support. ‘Capacity development’ has been recognized as an urgent priority for decades, but progress has mostly been slow and difficult. It is ultimately a complex, organic and long-term set of processes, not an area for ‘quick fixes’ or bureaucratically engineered solutions. The Evaluation has seen instances of promising steps but there is no model solution in sight. In addition to the many other efforts that countries have under way, the Evaluation found a widespread need for countries to set out some key priorities for support to strengthen their own capacities. This is a pre-requisite for securing the increased and better-coordinated support that donors/agencies have promised.

***Recommendation 8. Intensify the political priority and concrete actions to combat poverty, exclusion and corruption***

1. Many partner country governments need to devote higher political priority and more focused action to further reducing the most stubborn development challenges of poverty, exclusion and corruption.
2. The Evaluation has confirmed - in assessing the recent record of aid to the poorest, and particularly women and girls - that even the best of aid and aid reforms can only encourage and reinforce, but not replace, strong and effective national commitment and action. Meanwhile, the cancer of corruption, present everywhere in the world, is the focus of steadily growing public knowledge and anger in most countries. In spite of a broad wave of initial plans and measures, it continues to frustrate the best intentions and objectives of more effective aid and limit the potential for better partnerships. These objectives are first and foremost important to countries themselves, but they are also the subject of firm international obligations and re-commitment in the Accra Agenda. At the same time, they are fundamental to aid and cooperation relationships and to the support among populations. Together with the policies and concrete actions needed, the handling of these issues will benefit from a redoubling of effort in transparency, more country-centred dialogue on aid management, and more open approaches to mutual accountability and risk management.

**For policymakers in donor countries**

***Recommendation 9. Match the crucial global stakes in aid and reform with better delivery on promises made***

1. Most donor countries, at a top political level, need to face up to and rectify the gaps between their high stakes in aid programmes and in the historic compact to improve them and a slow and wavering record of reform.
2. The Declaration compact has been a major step towards tackling longstanding problems in aid and giving new impetus to helping the world’s poor build better lives. Promising a new spirit of partnership to pursue the Millennium Development Goals, it has attracted global attention and stirred expectations of important improvements in ‘North-South’ relations. As the Evaluation has found, most partner countries have slowly but surely started making the changes to keep their more difficult side of the aid reform bargain. Moreover a number of donor countries - all with their own political, institutional, and administrative constraints - have also shown that obstacles can be overcome when sufficient political priority is invested and public understanding and support enlisted.
3. With the high geo-political stakes involved, and the shared political commitments that have been made, it is urgent that all donor governments find ways to overcome the internal institutional or administrative obstacles slowing their aid reforms. It has been shown that with political determination even constraints such as standard governmental budgetary, audit or staffing requirements can be adapted to respond to the different requirements of effective work in development cooperation. The Declaration compact was premised from the start on an expectation of coordinated and harmonised action by donors/agencies to follow and support the lead of partner countries. Without this, the consensus will fray, the momentum will be lost and an historic opportunity will slip away.

***Recommendation 10. Face up to and manage risks honestly, admit failures***

1. Donor governments need to acknowledge frankly that development and development aid are inherently uncertain and risky and put in place measures to manage risks jointly with partners in the spirit of a mature partnership.
2. In many donor countries, the period since the Paris Declaration has coincided with intense concerns about accountability for public spending that have at times translated into high levels of risk aversion. These tendencies have hampered good practice and frustrated many of the changes called for in the Declaration. But to try to avoid all risks in development cooperation is to risk irrelevance. There are ways of promoting a realistic public understanding of the uncertainties and risks of development and aid work and how to handle and learn from them, including both cutting edge initiatives and the effective use of tools like evaluation. This Evaluation finds further evidence to support the conclusions of other major assessments that the new approaches to development cooperation are in reality no more risky than traditional projects that are tightly controlled by donors/agencies, and that there are sound ways of managing the risks in the new models while also enhancing the development benefits.

***Recommendation 11. Intensify peer pressure on ‘free-riders’ for more balanced donor efforts***

1. Donors countries and agencies need to harness at a high political level the instruments of constructive peer pressure that were expected in the Declaration to be drivers of better collective performance – a minority of reform-minded donors/agencies cannot hold up the donor side of the compact on their own.
2. The Evaluation findings suggest that more partner countries can be expected to take the lead in defining their priorities, seeking to align and harmonise different donors’/agencies’ activities, secure and publish information about aid and strengthen requirements for mutual accountability at the country level. It is clear that some donors/agencies are already working in this mode and supporting its progress. Others are so far less willing or able to do so, resulting in highly uneven donor/agency performance and an overall collective effort that falls short of the Declaration’s agreed vision. At the same time there are impressive examples of partner countries and donors/agencies developing a wide variety of coordinated and harmonized support arrangements, and clear potentials for more. Looking toward the High Level Forum - the senior platform and opportunity for mutual accountability on aid effectiveness - it will be important for donors/agencies to use all opportunities for constructive peer pressure to ensure a more balanced and collective response by the donor community in the next phases of aid reform.

1. Hereafter referred to as the ‘Declaration’. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See the Technical Annex to the Synthesis Report for a full discussion of the methodology applied. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Accra High Level Forum in 2008 adopted an Agenda for Action to accelerate progress toward the Declaration objectives, and strengthened or sharpened a number of its commitments and areas of work. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The word ‘campaign’ is used here advisedly, implying a sustained and concerted effort to achieve major and difficult objectives. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The term ‘significant’ is used to mean definite and verifiable, but not necessarily major, effects. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The UN Development Group and the Asian Development Bank participated with institutional studies in Phase 1, and the African Development Bank in Phase 2. The Asian Development bank also produced a substantial update report for Phase2. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See discussion on added value in Conclusions section. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Using a generic definition of development aid to distinguish it from other forms of commercial, political or military support [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This Report refers to the Paris Declaration disciplines to reflect that the combination of 5 guiding principles and 56 commitments to make specific changes must be seen to constitute a set of disciplines accepted by the adherents. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)