

Assessment

As point of departure the author states that as a result of new actors emerging as important resources of finance, new instruments to deliver aid, and new goals of development the international aid administration has become highly complex with a lot of inconsistencies and overlaps becoming thus increasingly inefficient. He sees it more a non-system than a system. To remedy the highly unsatisfactory situation he argues for a clear role assignment among multilateral institutions which should allow assessing their performance and making the whole system more efficient. The author's diagnosis can hardly be disputed and the thrust of his approach will certainly be welcomed by a broad audience. There are, however, some aspects that may deserve further consideration.

The author mentions the Paris Declaration as an attempt to overcome the negative results of excessive fragmentation. It would have been highly desirable to get some information on the results of its implementation. To what extent has it really worked and achieved the stipulated aims? In the light of the author's diagnosis one may conclude that the implementation of the Paris Declaration did not meet its expectations. The author is encouraged to add a couple of sentences in this regard based on OECD's experience.

The reviewer has more difficulties with the concluding section "Toward Accountability & Efficient Assignment". What is meant is "Efficient Role Assignment". The author states that many multinational institutions claim to work on the MDGs and asks who will be held accountable when the MDGs go unmet. In order to promote accountability he proposes assigning MDGs (goals and / or targets) to multilateral agencies together with a specialisation among them along the lines of the Tinbergen rule. He outlines an assignment rule following a two-target two-instrument approach taking agencies as instruments. Can this really be done? Unfortunately and a bit surprisingly the author does not further develop his proposal.

The reviewer may be allowed to add some reflexions on what in his perception was meant to be the main thrust of the paper. The basic idea to assign each MDG to a multinational agency and holding this agency accountable for achieving or not achieving it has some similarity with the concept of management by objectives increasingly used in commercial enterprises. Specific obtainable targets are assigned to groups of people who are hold responsible for achievement. For this concept it is essential that those who are responsible for achieving the objective control the decisive causal variables.

Is this requirement fulfilled in the case of MDGs and international agencies? Let us take for example Target 2 of MDG 1, i.e. to halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. For achieving this target it is essential to improve access to food for a majority of people which may imply producing more food at affordable prices, enabling rural people to produce more food for home consumption and create additional income for low income groups. For this to happen farmers have to increase food production for which they need additional inputs, banks have to supply the necessary credit, extension services are required to improve farmers' knowledge, marketing systems have to function, and enterprises should provide employment and income. National governments have to create a conducive environment for private actors in all sectors, to provide public goods at various levels in different parts of the economy and they have to design adequate macro-economic and sectoral policies.

What is then the role of multinational agencies such as the World Bank, regional banks, IFAD, FAO, CGIAR, and others? Their role is to create awareness where national governments do not assign adequate importance to the functions they have to perform in order

to achieve the target which may even include pressures by making financial support conditional. Of course they have an important role to play by providing financial support, expertise in policy design and in technical matters, and international public goods. Each of them has its own expertise and partners within the social set-up of developing countries and is therefore better equipped than others to perform specific functions required to achieve one goal or one target. It is certainly desirable that multinational agencies specialise along the lines of comparative advantages, that overlaps and inconsistencies are eliminated and that they work in close coordination including formal agreements. But can one really go much further? Achieving or not achieving MDGs depends on smooth and coordinated interaction among many actors, private and public, national and multinational.

The author may, perhaps, wish to carry the basic idea outlined in the concluding section of his paper further and to develop it into a full-fledged approach taking into account the aspect of feasibility¹.

¹ Corrections of minor typing errors may add to clarity. In the section “Mapping the Multilateral Donor Non-System” following the second and the third bullet point the enumeration is not quite clear. There are more brackets closed than opened which may make thing even more confusing than they are. The second table should be table 2, not table 4.