GOING DIGITAL: THE "NORWEGIAN DEVELOPMENT AID – STATISTICS AND RESULTS" PORTAL

Key messages

Norway has developed a portal presenting how and where Norwegian development assistance is spent, and the results achieved. By introducing new ways of structuring and presenting results information, the portal addresses a call for more systematic and complete results data for accountability and communication. The need for improved internal learning and steering will be addressed in the next phase of development.

● **Keywords**

Innovation | Learning and knowledge management | Management systems | Managing for Sustainable Development Results | Official development assistance allocations

● **Key partner**

Norway

Challenge

Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) publishes development co-operation information online and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regularly reports results to parliament. Over the years, several independent evaluations and assessments by the Auditor General have identified shortcomings in the use of results information for learning and decision making as well as in communication to the public and parliament. Official Development Assistance (ODA) statistics based on OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) reporting standards were considered of good quality. However, results reporting was less structured and mainly focused on individual projects, with significant variation in form and content.

Approach

In 2018, the Minister for Development Cooperation announced the development of a results portal aiming to inform the Norwegian public openly and transparently about how development funds are spent and the results. The objective was a more continuous, systematic, and complete communication of both funding

and results. The Norwegian development aid portal was developed over a 12-month period by a team of Norad staff in collaboration with external consultants. It was launched on 1 December 2020.

Key features of the initiative were:

○ **Its dual objective.** While the main driver was originally better communication and accountability, the concept phase expanded the objectives to include improving learning and steering within the assistance administration itself.

○ **Capturing three levels of results information.** An additional level of results information was added. Together with Results Reports that analyse and summarise results at a thematic or country level, and Results Stories from selected programmes, project managers are now required to develop annual and final Results Assessments for each individual grant agreement. To facilitate this, guidance and templates were developed to provide a common, yet flexible format that can capture qualitative and/or quantitative results information.

○ **Gradual rollout.** To manage the workload, new results information will be introduced gradually, starting with two thematic portfolios, Renewable Energy and Primary Education.

Results

Improved transparency and communication:

○ As of December 2022, the portal captures complete ODA statistics from 1960, including for 2021, and provides public access to all grant agreements. Emphasis was placed on a user friendly and intuitive portal to best meet the objective of improved public access to results information.

○ Each grant agreement has a unique agreement page highlighting key project information, its financial status, and related Sustainable Development Goals. Agreements for Renewable Energy and Primary Education also feature Results Assessments.

○ The portal explains plainly what is meant by 'results', how results are measured including data challenges, and why measuring and reporting on results is important.

Status two years after the launch:

○ The portal contains fewer new results data than planned and data input to the portal is not yet sufficiently automated.

○ The components of the portal aimed at improving internal learning and steering were postponed to a second development phase. This second phase has been transformed into the development of a knowledge and results database with a wider purpose: to collect and store a wide range of data for internal analysis, learning and decision making. Some of the data will also serve the objective of communicating through the results portal.

Lessons learnt

- • Balancing iteration and innovation with bureaucratic processes and limitations in data availability called for **adjusting ambitions and a phased approach**. A combination of external technical expertise and experienced internal staff firmly rooted within the organisation was key to the process.

- **A phased approach has advantages and risks**:
  - An advantage is that parts of the project can be completed and working well, even if the entire project is not rolled out as initially envisioned.
  - Challenges include maintaining political momentum and leadership interest over time (especially after the official launch) and securing funding for further development phases. We would encourage others embarking on similar projects to try to mitigate these risks.

- It has proven **challenging to add new tasks** to the already high workload of project managers, and therefore the production of Results Assessments has not gone as planned.

Further information

Norad, Aid Results – a portal for statistics on and results of Norwegian development aid, https://resultater.norad.no/en.

Office of the Auditor General of Norway, Investigation of information on the results of education aid, https://www.riksrevisjonen.no/en/reports2/en-2018-2019/Investigation-of-information-on-the-results-of-education-aid.

OECD resources

OECD, *Results in development co-operation*, https://www.oecd.org/dac/results-development.

OECD (2019), *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Norway 2019*, OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/75084277-en.

To learn more about Norway's development co-operation see:

OECD (2021), "Norway", in *Development Co-operation Profiles*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/aaf0304f-en.

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