

Ownership

Partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies, and coordinate development actions.

The Paris Declaration recognizes that country ownership of development efforts is the primary condition for effectiveness: development can be successful, sustained, and fully effective only when the partner country takes the lead in determining the goals and priorities of its own development and sets the agenda for how they are to be achieved.

Evaluation of the Implementation of the Declaration

An evaluation of the implementation of the Declaration indicates a greater degree of ownership, although the practical meaning and boundaries of country ownership and leadership often remain difficult to define. It appears that ownership often remains narrowly confined within partner countries, heavily weighted in favor of central government players rather than provincial and local authorities. Even the most experienced countries find it difficult to translate national strategies into sector strategies and operational and decentralized programs, and to coordinate donors. The ownership situation also varies across sectors, with sectors such as education, health, energy and infrastructure remaining primarily government led, while civil society and marginalized groups find greater space for partnerships in the cross-sectoral and humanitarian areas of cooperation and development. Several partner countries expressed the need for greater clarity in defining and measuring ownership and tailoring it to local conditions.

Lessons on Strengthening Ownership:

The Paris Declaration has prompted a progressively wider approach to thinking about ownership, taking the agenda in new directions, most of which involve intensified support for capacity development, including capacity to exercise leadership, but also involving civil society, local governments, and the private sector. This understanding of ownership has also led to more use of political economy and governance analysis in countries. There is growing convergence among partners and donors around some priorities – notably in the areas of human rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment, and good governance.

The lessons of experience also indicate that the treatment of ownership should not be limited to the technical challenges involved in operational planning. The Paris Declaration commitments on ownership give a central place to implementing strategies and coordinating aid with the help of broad consultative processes involving parliaments, civil society, and the private sector. Country ownership is likely to be stronger if it is democratically based.



There is also an increasingly recognized link between ownership and building of robust and effective states. This is particularly relevant for in situations of state fragility or facing the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction. Ownership implies a commitment to peace and progress at the highest political level, and the translation of the commitment into incentives that elicit enhanced performance by development actors at all other levels.

The Paris Declaration has helped shift norms towards the expectation that the initiative should lie with partner countries; but the generalized change of behavior that is needed is far from being realized.

Accra Agenda for Action

The Accra Agenda for Action calls for strengthening and deepening ownership in developing countries. It calls on developing country governments to take stronger leadership of their own development policies, and engage with their parliaments and citizens in shaping those policies. It calls on donors to support them by respecting countries' priorities, investing in their human resources and institutions, making greater use of their systems to deliver aid, and increasing the predictability of aid flows.

