The Aid Effectiveness Architecture in Africa: An Analysis of Aid Structures in Kenya's Agriculture Sector

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Abstract

This study examines in detail the development aid architecture in Kenya's agriculture sector. The focus is on the mechanisms in place within the Kenyan government (and ministry of agriculture in particular), mechanisms among and within donor agencies, and overall coordination mechanisms that bring together the donors and the government. Findings show that coordination and harmonization activities among donors are yet to yield the desired outcomes such as the division of labor protocol and joint programming. Weaknesses are also observed on the government side where it appears authorities are yet to internalize PD concepts and interpret them to suit the country's needs. The author argues for the need to strengthen mechanisms of citizen participation and oversight over aid effectiveness architecture thereby ensure greater accountability from lead agencies involved in the development cooperation processes including government bureaucrats.

Keywords: aid effectiveness, agriculture sector, development policy

Introduction

Despite contradictory views on whether development aid is beneficial to recipient economies, the international community has been increasingly concerned about developing strategies and policies of making aid more effective (Howes, 2011). It is in this spirit that successive international high-level forums on aid effectiveness have been held since the Paris Declaration (PD) in 2005. The main objective has mainly been to take stock of what has already been achieved and to seek ways of accelerating progress. Consequently, forums such as Accra in 2008 and Busan in 2011 have since been held with a focus of reforming the aid architecture. In the more recent years, focus has shifted to "effective development cooperation" from "aid effectiveness" as demonstrated by the recent high-level meetings in Mexico City (2014) and Nairobi (2016).

In this paper, the authors highlight the steps that have been taken by various players in pursuit of the PD agenda within the agriculture sector in Kenya. In particular, the study examines in detail the development aid architecture through focusing on mechanisms in place within the Kenyan government, mechanisms among and within donor agencies, and overall coordination mechanisms that bring together the donors and the government.

Kenya's agriculture sector typifies most other African countries where small-scale agricultural production is dominant. However, unlike many surrounding countries that have been in political turmoil, Kenya has had a stable capitalist, pro-western orientation since independence in 1963. This has arguably made it possible for the country to maintain a long history of donor-recipient relationship with leading western powers that according to Hornsby (2013) has ensured a continued flow of foreign aid thereby sustaining the economy over the years. Kenya's stability (as opposed to specific policy actions) is probably a major factor for continued aid flow and the relatively better performance of aid in the country when compared to neighboring countries. The core of the PD is however beyond generalities of aid performance with concerns shifting to the quality of policy making processes within foreign aid relationships (Whitfield & Fraser, 2008).

According to Howes (2011), efforts to improve aid effectiveness should focus on improving recipient government performance, productivity of donor agency performance and productivity of donor-recipient interaction. This three-tier conception of the structure of aid effectiveness strategies mirrors the specific mechanisms that have been instituted to implement PD in Kenya (herein referred to as aid effectiveness architecture). These mechanisms include: a) those that are meant to streamline actions within the Kenyan government, b) those that are intended for improving the quality of donor actions, and c) those that are meant to improve interactions between donors and Kenyan government. Some of the bodies that are currently in place include the aid effectiveness unit at the Treasury, the Kenya Joint Assistance Strategy, the sector working groups, the Aid Effectiveness Group (formerly the Harmonisation, Alignment and Coordination Group), the Development Partners Coordination Group, the Development Partnership Group, and the Sector Working Groups (SWGs). Although there have been a number of studies undertaken to measure the progress of the implementation of PD in Kenya, none hitherto has specifically analyzed structures established to help implementation. Examples of such studies include a 2011 report by OECD which highlighted the importance of cooperation between the government and her development partners stating that progress towards aid effectiveness relied on the level of input of both these entities. It nevertheless lacked analysis of the structures and the aid effectiveness architecture in place. Another report by New Partnership for African Development (Nepad, 2013) only discusses the status of implementation without going into the details of the success of each structure established.

Qualitative methods were used in this study; mainly semi-structured interviews with officials of the Kenyan Treasury (External Budget Directorate), Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MALF) and officials of donor agencies. Others included policy analysts, NGO officials and officials of donor funded projects/programs. Most of these interviews were undertaken in Nairobi. Further information was gained through focus group discussions (FGD) with farmers in three Kenyan counties, namely Nakuru, Makueni and Kwale as well as examination of official government, donor and NGO documents. The paper is organized as follows: section two discusses the overall aid coordination mechanisms, followed by the aid effectiveness architecture within the Kenyan government in section three. In section four, the coordination and harmonisation efforts among donors are analyzed, and section five looks at the fate of the joint efforts between the donors and the government. Section 6 examines the Kenyan government leadership in the aid effectiveness agenda. The last section is the conclusion.

Gaps: Overall Aid Coordination

Efforts to better coordinate aid in Kenya pre-date the 2005 Paris Declaration with the World Bank playing a critical role in convening the Kenya Consultative Meeting. Prior to 2003, these meetings were held in Paris (known as the "Paris Club") and became a barometer for determining the relationship between Kenya and her donors. Most of that period was particularly tumultuous for the relationship between Kenya and her donors mainly because Kenya was deemed to have failed to comply with conditions for funding set by the World Bank and the IMF. The Consultative Group is particularly remembered for its ability to rally donors to force the Kenyan government to yield to reforms such as privatization and the introduction of multi-party politics. Of that period, O'brien and Ryan (2001) state:

> The influence of the donor community in Kenya was now so decisive that the Kenyan government not only succumbed and provided a detailed privatization plan at the November 1991 Donor Consultative Meeting held in Paris but most remarkably it grudgingly yielded to the establishment of the multi-party system. (p. 374)

Although it became increasingly associated with the push for reforms, the Consultative Group was intended to provide the donors and the government an opportunity to consult on the country budget shortfalls and how the donors were to share this burden. Donors however took advantage of this to make it an opportunity to roundly assail the government on failures to implement prescriptive reforms and observance of human rights. In 1994 for example, the Group humiliated Kenya's delegation led by a top Cabinet minister by refusing to give him audience, and rejected government request to resume aid. After 2003 however, changes have been noted. First, after a 7-year break, the Consultative Meetings were moved from Paris to Kenya's capital city of Nairobi. This was in itself an indication that the donor attitude towards Kenya had changed because, by Kenya being the host, it was not unexpected that the visiting donor delegates would go soft in their desire to insist on stringent conditions in exchange for development resource support. The outcome was more than expected because in addition to this, Kenya's status in the meeting improved so that at the 2003 Consultative Group meeting, the Kenyan government began to co-chair the meeting alongside the World Bank.

In the years that followed, the leading daily newspaper commentaries expressed these changes by noting that there was less complaisant rush within the government circles around the period of the Consultative Group meeting as compared with earlier years when officials would literally jostle to please the donors. The meeting's structure was now designed in a way that portrayed some sense of dialogue between Kenya and the donors. It is in this environment that the donors pledged to rely more on government management and financing arrangements as well as increasing their aid efforts in the area of programme support that relies more on the country systems (World-Bank, 2005). This change was a reflection of the new policy adopted by OECD-DAC during their high level meeting in Rome in 2003 where they agreed that Consultative Meetings shall be held in the recipient country and that the recipient country shall assume chairmanship and the setting of the agenda (OECD-DAC, 2003). In Kenya, these changes conveniently coincided with the exit of a regime led by President Moi which had years of strained relations with donors. A new government was taking over that was made of a coalition of former opposition parties. Happening at such a time, it worked well as a sign of approval for the incoming government. Overall though, it also succeeded in dramatizing the changes because of the sudden manner in which the changes were introduced – e.g. moving the venue to Kenya and granting Kenya the privilege of co-chairing the meetings.

More than ten years later, some remain doubtful and question the genuineness of donors giving the Kenyan government a freehand in deciding how to utilize development funds. Policy analysts interviewed argued that despite the rhetoric of change, donors remained imperious in the way they dealt with Kenya. Generally, it has been observed that donor statements tended to patronize the government, to focus on its shortcomings and in some cases to include underlying warnings of consequences if it (Kenya) did not take appropriate action on issues they (donors) raised. One media report for instance quoted donors threatening to withdraw aid in the 2005 Consultative Group meeting because of perceived corruption (Mulama, 2005). With such ability to forge solidarity, it is possible to see how consultative group meetings can easily work more to the advantage of donors than to the interests of the Kenyan government. Unanimity among donors is possible because the donor representatives meet regularly and have ample opportunity to work out what would be convenient to their individual interests collectively. This solidarity did not transcend all matters as it seemed to work well when donors had joint issues to discuss with the government, but showed signs of mistrust between themselves in other circumstances. In confidential discussions, donor representatives mocked other agencies' policies on specific grounds e.g. that there was too much fragmentation in their approach or that their intentions were questionable (for example seeking to 'outshine others'). Although this kind of discourse was between officials of different agencies, it is also not lost on observers that the way donor agencies structured their programs depended on the domestic policies of their countries of origin. Their representatives therefore had little if any central role in making important decisions. At certain critical times, each donor directly negotiated with the Kenyan government the details of what they intended to undertake in a forum that other donors may not be party to. This negates the officially stated function of the Consultative Group meeting of 'providing overall coordination' (McCormick & Schmitz, 2011) because specific donor programs and projects did not come up for discussion.

A consultative group meeting is therefore advantageous to donors; it gives them the solidarity and a common voice with which to face the Kenyan government (despite each of them having their own strategic interests). Meanwhile, the Kenyan government position (if any) can easily be drowned as a lone voice in the middle of a coherent voice of the donors at these meetings. The net effect of this is the weakening of the ability of the Kenyan government to whip donors to its desired agenda while also foregoing benefits of full coordination among the donors as these same donors continue the pursuit of their own programs and projects. In line with these findings, it can be argued that donor solidarity at the Consultative meetings was counterproductive to the strengthening of Kenya's ownership of its own development agenda.

The Development Partnership Forum (DPF) is another high level outfit, just a notch below the Consultative Group that meets twice every year for policy dialogue involving Kenyan government ministers (now cabinet secretaries) and Ambassadors (for bilateral agencies) and Country Representatives (for Multilateral Agencies). This level of engagement is intended to handle high level coordination issues and especially political issues. According to AES-Kenya (2016), the Development Partnership Forum is credited with pushing for the formation of Harmonization, Alignment and the coordination group (HAC) which was later named the Aid Effectiveness Group (AEG). It is this HAC and later AEG that has been the major force behind the practical aid effectiveness initiatives in Kenya including development of the Kenya Joint Assistance Strategy (KJAS) of 2007-2012, while it was still named HAC, that was intended to replace the individual donor strategies in Kenya (McCormick & Schmitz, 2011). Even after its expiry in 2012, most of the government officials and donor representatives interviewed in this study still made reference to KJAS as a document that guided donor and government engagement in a manner that suggested diminishing traction to the agenda of the Aid Effectiveness Principles.

Operations at the DPF are not so different from the Consultative Group. Although the DPF brings together representatives of donors, the civil society and the government, the divide between donors on one end and the government on the other end remains visible. As is the case of the Consultative group meetings, donor representatives participate in the DPF having an already united position on issues they feel are important to their work in Kenya, and often point out issues for which the government should take steps to address but are not keen on confronting challenges in harmonization of their programs. For example, following the 6th Development Partnership Forum in 2013, a carefully worded joint statement was issued that, among other demands, called on the government to amend a proposed law viewed as limiting democratic space because this could

> restrict or even prevent the delivery of assistance in areas such as humanitarian aid, health, education, agriculture, implementation of the Constitution and other areas targeting marginalised groups (Development-Partners, 2013).

Thus, through a strategy of identifying shortcomings in government, it can be argued that donors use their solidarity in the DPF deliberations as an opportunity to shift attention away from their own deficits in the implementation of the PD. The Kenyan government on its part is either uninterested or incapable of making stronger demands in this respect – at least from analysis of the proceedings at the forum. Often, the objective of the speeches made from the government side appear to respond to the concerns raised by the donors, and lack clear demands on donors to fulfil their obligations to the PD. (For example, see a speech by the Deputy President at the 2013 DPF at http://www.deputypresident.go.ke).

Aid Effectiveness Architecture within the Kenyan government

The aid effectiveness secretariat was established in 2010 at Kenya's National Treasury office within the External Resources Department. It is one of the most significant outfits within the government dealing directly with aid effectiveness issues. According to interviews with an official coordinating the unit, its existence came into being as a secretariat for the Harmonization, Alignment and Coordination (HAC) group and continued to play this role when the HAC group changed its name to the Aid Effectiveness Group (AEG). Its role is indicated as that of coordinating implementation of Paris, Accra and Busan resolutions of the high level forum on aid effectiveness. Through interviews with this contact person, it was learned that the AES was a small unit within the External Resources Department run by two officers. As a secretariat for the AEG whose membership straddles the Kenyan government and the civil society and donors, the AES is expected to have strong links with these membership entities. Its establishment is described as "signalling a renewed partnership between the government of Kenya and her Development partners to make aid work better in Kenya" (AES-Kenya, 2016). It is therefore important in the planning and organization of various meetings on implementation of aid effectiveness principles that involve the government and its development partners.

As currently constituted however and being part of the National Treasury, it is difficult to see the AES as a unit that is duly representative of the various players in the aid relationship, including the government, the development partners and the civil society. Its positioning makes it more of an appendage of a Kenyan government department, and therefore, one can anticipate how difficult it is for it to meaningfully drive the AEG agenda including tasks such as those achieved through the KJAS. Even as a purely government unit, the AES remains considerably weak in terms of its ability to network through the various government ministries and departments. None of the officials interviewed from the Ministry of Agriculture, for example, had knowledge of either its role or existence. In the design of the AES, provision was not made for mechanisms to extend its presence to all ministries and departments that implement donor supported programs. This aspect appears either neglected or found unnecessary, yet it would be useful if there was a sound information flow between the implementing agencies and the organization tasked with coordinating implementation of the PD. Ideally for any unit to operate optimally, it should have representative units within the various government departments that oversee activities that have a close relation to its mandate.

During interviews, ministry officials were quick to point out other parallels of this nature that exist within government departments, and wondered why the same strategy had not been used in the design of the AES. Examples included the HIV/AIDS coordinating units and units in charge of gender established in most government ministries to help in mainstreaming these issues. One respondent particularly suggested that planning units existing in all ministries could have easily taken up the task of overseeing implementation of aid effectiveness principles as its additional role if it had been found necessary because the unit already oversees project planning and monitoring in various ministries. With the AES being unable to replicate itself at the level of ministries and departments, it was no surprise that government ministry officials hardly knew of its existence, let alone its supposed role.

While the AES major concern would be to reinforce coordination of project and program implementation, doubts were expressed on capacity of the various departments to adequately handle the ownership concept because of the numerous units that exist within departments that are in themselves in dire need of coordination. For example, the Chief Finance Officers who control disbursement of funds and the Departmental planners and economists have different chains of command. To complicate matters further, Project Coordinators of the various donor funded programs had their own centers of power and were also likely to be independent of the civil service – depending on the requirements of the donor. Therefore, even before embarking on harmonization of various entities involved in agriculture sector projects and programmes, there already existed internal challenges within the Ministries and government departments that were also in dire need of internal restructuring in order to enhance harmonization

Weaknesses in aid effectiveness infrastructure within the Kenyan government are further evident in the organization of the Government Coordination Group (GCG). This is an entity whose role has been identified as that of coordinating aid effectiveness across different government ministries. According to AES-Kenya (2016), the GCG is made up of Permanent Secretaries (now Cabinet/Principal Secretaries) from ministries that are implementing externally funded development projects, and its establishment is to strengthen ownership and participation of government officials in dialogue with donors. Although its structure was agreed upon and a draft cabinet memo prepared in 2010, enquiries showed that the entity remained dormant and was yet to conduct any meaningful activities relating to its objectives. It was revealed that the Cabinet had not formally approved the group and so the planned monthly meetings were yet to take place as envisaged.

Although some officials blamed transitional issues following the 2013 national elections and changes in constitution as reasons for the shortcomings observed in the aid effectiveness infrastructure within the government, this did not adequately explain the fact that there is not much enthusiasm in setting up the preliminary structures that would ensure that the GCG could run smoothly. Perhaps a more fundamental question was whether there existed any motivation for bureaucrats in government to put in place a working aid effective framework that cuts across ministries. For most government officials, attracting donor funding is an obvious priority. Since there is no connection between the ability to get donor funding and active participation in forums such as the GCG, it means that interest in the PD implementation is a lesser priority. Indeed, donor support to each Ministry depended on the donors' priorities and ability of the ministry officials to make a convincing case for support. It is probable that the idea of the GCG would have worked much better if it had a role in sanctioning how donor funds were to be distributed among different ministries and government departments.

In summary, it is clear that support for an aid effectiveness infrastructure within the Kenyan government system has not received adequate enthusiasm and support. Establishment and the structuring of the AES, for example, does not appear to emanate from a strong internal drive to achieve particular policy objectives beyond its symbolic value of demonstrating the country's commitment to the PD. Other initiatives such as the GCG have also failed to gain traction with ministry bureaucrats being more interested in attracting donor funded programs into their departments rather than seeking the PD compliance.

Coordination Efforts Among Donors

The Development Partners Coordination Group (DCG) is the organ that overall brings together donors within Kenya. Representatives of about 19 donor agencies are actively involved in the DCG which began regular monthly meetings in 2004. From their regular meetings and ability to rally donors together in addressing issues of their concern, it has also been able to mobilize its equivalents at the sector level to handle sector-related issues. Consequently, in the general Agriculture Sector, the donors formed the Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) Donor Group that meets on a monthly basis to deliberate donor concerns and aid coordination issues at the sector level. Interviews with some of the donor representatives showed that the ARD had a membership of about 17. All of them are part of the OECD/DAC group, although only ten meet regularly. Interviews also showed that through these meetings, the donor representatives have been able to share information about their activities, but they could sometimes use them as avenues for discovering opportunities for cooperation.

In comparison to what goes on between government ministries and departments, donors certainly appeared better organized and keen to portray some level of commitment at harmonizing their activities as per the requirements of the Paris Declaration. Key informants credited the rotational three-member committee that runs the ARD as the key in providing leadership and driving its agenda. However, during an interview with the then Chairperson of the ARD, it was apparent that goodwill from the donors alone was insufficient to guarantee progress in the implementation of the PD even amongst donors themselves. That there were limits to the outcomes of donor deliberations and irrespective of how often they met, their actions were insufficient to replace the input of the Kenyan government and the true owners of the Agriculture Sector. Conceding that donors had their own preferences on programs and projects, the chairperson’s view was that the Kenyan government needed to weigh in strongly to provide guidance so that donor interests and other factors such as duplication and fragmentation of development efforts would not derail the country’s strategic objectives. Most ARD members were in agreement that the peer mechanisms within the ARD to self-regulate donor actions were insufficient because they lacked the legitimacy that was in the hands of the Kenyan government. In recognition of this challenge, the leadership of the ARD had been keen on establishing a forum that would brought together the donors and the government in which the government through the Ministry of Agriculture could assume the leadership role. Already, contact had been initiated with the Cabinet Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture for this engagement to proceed. It however remained unclear how successful this initiative would be, given the dominant view that the initiation of the engagement processes should have begun with the “owners” (in this case the relevant ministry of the Kenyan government) and not the donors.

There were undertones even amongst the donor representatives and expatriate community that strong ‘donor-only’ forums created an exclusive “club of donors” that alienated other stakeholders and networks necessary for achieving development objectives. Most of the government officials approached on this matter were in agreement observing that expatriates working for donor agencies had created their own comfort zones that hindered enhanced interaction with local players in the interest of the sector. One officer's comment was instructive:

> These donor experts are comfortable meeting on their own. I think that they consider themselves to have a superior view of the situation at hand or they just do not have value for discussions with us.

In addition to exclusivity among donor agents, officers also mentioned that exclusive relationships also occur between donor agents and specific government or NGO officials who may act as 'gate-keepers' as per their privileged positions. This was thought to limit healthy interaction that could be helpful in achieving comprehensive solutions to issues at hand. Others saw this as emanating from the premium value that has become associated with the ability to develop a working relations with donor agents, where those who make it become protectionist. Nevertheless, it must also be appreciated that the level of interaction is sometimes dictated on a needs basis, and that donor agencies may often choose to reach out to specific senior officials because of their power and ability to make things "happen".

In summary however, other signals emanating from donor representatives (e.g. the U.S.) suggest that some donor agencies remain suspicious of the government systems which they see as not meeting their threshold on matters such as legitimacy, competency and corruption. Meanwhile, regular meetings between donor agents are likely to remain intact but with little benefit to improvement in coordination and harmonization of donor activities. In the absence of strong oversight, donors appear content that their regular meetings and sharing of information is adequate in meeting their PD requirements.

Donors and Government: The Fate of Joint Efforts in Sector Coordination

Joint effort at coordination between donors and government should remain a key ingredient for progress. The Kenya Joint Assistance Strategy (KJAS) was a significant milestone in this process because through it donors agreed to support Kenya's Vision 2030 development strategy on the basis of the three pillars of encouraging economic growth, investing in people, and strengthening institutions while improving governance (HAC, 2007). Unfortunately, the original KJAS was revised in 2009 and was meant to expire by 2012, and traction towards revision appears to have lost steam. For example, although a post Busan report on Kenya makes mention of the KJAS indicating that efforts were underway to revise it, nothing substantive has since come out. At the sector level, efforts by the government ministries and donors at developing a coordination framework to ease design and implementation of development programs are yet to make any substantive progress.

Formation of the Agriculture Sector Coordinating Unit (ASCU) in 2005 was one of the most significant efforts towards sector coordination in agriculture. Its establishment was part of the resolutions contained in the Strategy for the Revitalization of Agriculture (SRA) which sought for a coordinated approach between the government, donors and the private sector in the running of the Agriculture Sector (Poulton & Kanyinga, 2014). Although the idea of the ASCU was loaded with the greatest of intentions, by 2014, the unit was simply not as active and as strong an organization as had been purposed, and by 2015 it no longer existed. In an interview, one expert who was privy to the ASCU activities observed that the convening of the ICC had become difficult because the Permanent Secretaries were all too busy carrying out their individual mandates, and there was generally little time to convene as a group. Although a revolving chairmanship had been proposed initially, this was not implemented and therefore ownership issues of the ASCU processes cropped up as a challenge. Interviews, especially with officials of the Ministry affirmed that the ASCU itself was not well grounded within the government system and its existence relied greatly on the goodwill of a few top ministry officials and the generosity and pressure from development partners. Within the top ministry hierarchy, it was widely accepted that the ASCU was a donor driven organization that lacked legitimacy within the government and that its functions were in competition with other legitimately established organs of the Ministry. Contrariwise, the DAC sector aligned donors remained the greatest supporters of the ASCU, and this support extended even by donors known not to be enthusiastic of government led processes.

Being reliant on donors, the ASCU on its part seemed unable to push donors to comply with the commitments they made on the aid effectiveness front. Similarly, since it did not have a strong grounding within government, it would have been ambitious to have great expectations on the ASCU's ability to steer the government into good outcomes on the Paris Declaration. Apart from the murmurs within the Ministry of Agriculture, the actions of the central government also demonstrated the ASCU's shaky position. In one example, the central government ignored a planning framework known as the Medium Term Investment Plan (MTIP) that had been developed jointly between the Ministry and donors through the ASCU. Instead, it went ahead and commissioned its own framework. The Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) was officially utilized by the government as a planning framework for the agriculture sector strategy. The outcome of this was a level of confusion and dismay particularly amongst the donors in the Agriculture Sector who agonized on whether it was worthwhile for them to continue using the MTIP as a guide for their support for the sector after the government had pulled out of it.

Apart from the challenge of competing sector definitions, another issue that came up during field work for this study was what was observed as the formation of multiple donor groups with sector related objectives. The original Agriculture and Rural Development Group (ARD) driven through the KJAS considered itself the donor group in charge of the Productive Sector and pursued issues on agricultural value chain development while working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, and the Ministry of Cooperative Development. However, another donor group had recently been established and known as the "Private Sector and Trade" group mobilized through the Ministry of Industrialization. Participation in the new donor group was similar in terms of agencies represented (each agency possibly sending a different person to represent them). At the time of this research, the new donor group had identified seven (7) value chains to work on, all closely mirroring the ARD's activities and amounting to possible duplication of efforts. Another loose group of donors (led by the Swedish) focused on implementation of the Agriculture Sector Development Strategy (ASDS), a sector-wide program based at the Ministry of Agriculture and initiated through the Agriculture Sector Coordinating Unit (ASCU).

In retrospect, the ASCU's legitimacy problems can be traced to the occasions when the government is seen as undermining some of the ASCU-led processes. The dilemma being that the ASCU is supposedly an established government agency yet the reality has been that its legitimacy is not immune to intrigues within the government, formal or informal. Sector experts I interviewed pointed out that the ASCU also suffered from the inability of its constituent organs to function fully and provide the expected direction for the sector. Some of the failures related to the practicability of the said organs – for example, some argued that it was difficult to expect Permanent Secretaries in charge of the different ministries to meet frequently as an ICC when each of them had a full plate in terms of individual responsibilities for their ministries. Another argument was that not all ministries had equal interest in all the issues in the domain of the ASCU and therefore it was unrealistic to expect consistent participation and a general sense of being in the core of the ASCU agenda. Consequently, it was said that only the three ministries of Agriculture, Livestock and Cooperatives found the need to meet more often. Other issues bordered on supremacy wars between personalities in the different ministries exacerbated by the fact that the ASCU was hosted by one of the ministries and therefore seen as an appendage of that ministry. Matters were made no less difficult by a perception that the ASCU's existence seemed to rely on specific personalities' incumbency in top government offices. The 2013 change in government was, for example, said to have been particularly unfavorable to the ASCU's promoters in the civil service. What followed was an open hostility between the ASCU and the Ministry of Agriculture leading to the arrest of top ASCU officials who subsequently sought a court intervention and a judicial review (Kenya-Law, 2014; Musa, 2014). By 2016, the only vestiges of the ASCU that are still visible are their former offices and a modern boardroom bearing its name at the Ministry of Agriculture's Kilimo House in Nairobi.

In light of these findings, it is pertinent that some level of uncertainty still bedevils the joint efforts between the government and donors. The demise of the ASCU is quite informative in this case as it was originally intended to facilitate coordination of the various players in the sector including donors and the government. With the agriculture functions now devolved, coordination of sector activities will be further complicated as there may be need for each of the counties to have their own frameworks through which they can deal with donors operating in their respective counties. Given the difficulties observed with the ASCU and national level coordination, it is safe to predict that it will take a while before any semblance of a workable framework is achieved at the county level.

Effectiveness Structures: A Focus on the Kenyan Government Leadership Role

From observations, the Kenyan government-led aid effectiveness institutions and forums are much weaker and less active when compared to those established by donors. These weaknesses are laid bare through failures to convene frequently, lack of clear agenda and the fact that most of them do not exist beyond the Ministry of Finance as reported by Nepad (2013). For example, although the Ministry of Agriculture implements numerous donor-funded programs, the aid effectiveness unit at the Treasury is yet to extend its presence to the Ministry. Without a strong link, it is hard for the unit to influence decisions at the Ministry where officials often engage directly with donors for possible collaboration. Farmers and other beneficiaries are further removed for them to have any sort of awareness of their existence and implementation.

With the concept of ownership vesting greater power on recipients on matters of prioritizing donor fund utilization, it would be expected that recipient governments seize the opportunity and lead the processes of establishing the necessary structures for rapid implementation – especially so considering that aid in the past was based on donors dictating conditions. In this case however, the weak arrangements in place signal a lack of a strong internal drive from top officials to make PD implementation a priority. The inability for action to seamlessly permeate into every government department implementing donor funded programs or projects implies that the structures put in place retain their mechanistic nature as derived from the international system that drives the aid effectiveness policies. This is problematic as success in diffusion of international policies have often been associated with processes of interpretation and gradual adjustment to suit the local context (Stone, 2012). Consequently, the structures in place lack reflective learning or normative mimicry, a situation that has been associated with dysfunctional policy transfer (Sharman, 2010). Hence, Kenyan authorities within the Agriculture Sector do not exhibit the assertiveness that is expected of a country in a middle income bracket. Analysis of Kenya government officials' speeches during the PD related functions led to similar conclusions – Kenya was not providing strong leadership on its development agenda during her engagement with development partners. This view was consistent with what has been expressed elsewhere (ROA, 2014, p. 63). This state of affairs is in contrast with some other African countries including Botswana, Ethiopia and Rwanda that have been said to exhibit greater control over aid negotiations (Whitfield & Fraser, 2008).

In this particular case, it may be necessary to consider the impact of the historical factors associated with the agriculture sector in relation to Kenya's development partners. Unlike other sectors that are attracting newer donors, the Agriculture Sector remains dominated by traditional OECD-DAC donors. The significance of this is that the baggage of the previous donor conditionality relationship may be a cause for continued unequal relationship in aid negotiations. Second, the whole idea of the PD in itself presents a dilemma of sorts for those who have experience in "negotiating" for projects with donors. Generally, there is a perception among government officials that they (government officials) and the donor agents naturally hold opposing views, and that success in aid negotiation is only possible if one is able to tune their ideas to fit in with what the donors require. This is a perception that recognized the primacy of donors and the need to approach them carefully and skillfully as being the necessary bear minimum. By being at the forefront of the PD which champions recipient ownership ('recipient-like' views as opposed to 'donor-like views), the donors 'steal the show' and complicate the available options for government officials in terms of what body of ideas they are entitled to as agents for the recipient of aid at the negotiating table.

Conclusion

Analysis of the performance of the various organs established to implement PD in Kenya's agriculture sector reveals a major weakness in the aid effectiveness infrastructure. Donors seem enthusiastic to show that they are "walking the talk" through the establishment of active donor forums. However, as demonstrated in this paper, these forums have been more successful as opportunities for donors to "talk at each other" rather than to dialogue and develop a unified working relationship with the government officials. In other words, the forums have become an "exclusive club" where the members retreat into the comfort of other expatriates. Consequently, regular interaction between donors is yet to yield such things as a division of labor protocol, joint programming or resolutions to compel all donors to channel their aid through the country system. There is therefore some level of inaction that is inconsistent with the public image that the donor agencies project. For this reason, I argue that donors who are themselves responsible for the establishment of the PD are under pressure to show their commitment to it for political reasons. In doing this however, they are confronted by other competing interests and factors. One is the strategic interests that have previously been described as motivating donors to give aid (Gounder, 1994; Maizels & Nissanke, 1984; Schraeder, Hook, & Taylor, 1998; Younas, 2008; Youngs, 2004). Although donors in this particular study did not admit openly that their aid had strategic objectives, these could be gleaned from some of their policies and actions. For example, most donors chose to fund specific sub-sectors and not others. They were also more concerned about success being attributed to their actions rather than the overall output of aid. For this reason, joint programming has been resisted with donors shying off from e.g. the ASDSP, which was seen as being dominated by Sweden.

In addition to strategic interests, a number of donors in the agriculture sector in Kenya are wary of channeling their aid through the established government system, and instead choose their own ways of implementing projects and programs. Although again the reasons for these were not explicit, some of the donor representatives mentioned corruption among other system failures as deterrents to fully trusting the government system. For donors to adopt "conditionality-like" policies in an era of the PD appears as a contradiction of sorts because the cardinal principle of the PD is recognition of the self-determination of recipient countries led by democratic regimes. However, with the increasing importance that donors are attaching to the political economy analysis of recipient countries (OECD-DAC, 2005; Scott, 2007), these analytical reports seem to gain ground as instruments to validate donors' disinterest to fully implement aid effectiveness principles.

On the Kenyan government side, the aid effectiveness mechanisms in place have a different kind of weakness. They have failed to permeate through the various departments involved with donor programs, and as a result, knowledge about them is not widespread. Their presence is limited to the Ministry of Finance (Treasury) and their operations are less visible in comparison to related activities among donor agents within the country. This researcher suggests that this failure has come to be because of a lack of interest and motivation within Kenyan authorities to internalize the PD concepts and domesticate them through a process of interpretation. Internally, this cascades to either insufficient demand to push these processes forward or existence of other competing interests.

Another perspective to this is external where analysis points to the weakness as emerging from the fact that the PD processes rely on domineering strategic ideas proposed by its originators, that is, the donors who are also known to be the drivers of modern hegemonic ideas. Although the concepts themselves are shaped to present the government as an equal partner, i.e. the recipient and "owner" of the funded development initiative, donors are able to utilize soft forms of coercion among other covert strategies (Dobbin, Simmons, & Garrett, 2007) to limit independent initiatives that could enrich a government's own PD initiatives.

Lastly, challenges to diffusion of aid effectiveness principles into Kenya's agriculture sector can also be analyzed on the basis of the incentives/sanctions or normative pressure that many authors have argued as driving compliance (Checkel, 2014; Kelley & Simmons, 2013). Incentives for the PD implementation have mainly relied on the international forums that drive the aid effectiveness/effective development cooperation agenda. This form of incentive that is externally driven is insufficient to generate adequate action especially from the Kenyan government. The researcher therefore argues for the need to strengthen mechanisms of citizen participation and oversight over aid effectiveness architecture thereby ensuring greater accountability from lead agencies involved in the development cooperation processes including government bureaucrats. Relying on the engagement forums between Kenyan government and sector donors on their own is not adequate to induce compliance. With the ongoing devolution of agriculture functions in Kenya, it is expected that important development cooperation relationships will now be situated at the county level unlike in the past where these were highly centralized. The new aid architecture structures will be better placed if they adopt better accountability mechanisms.

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