

Evaluating the Implementation of the Aid Co-ordination Calendar 2009

Introduction

In September 2008, the international community met in Accra, Ghana, to review progress in the implementation of the Paris Declaration (PD, 2005). During the same year, Government took important steps in localizing both the PD (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA, 2008) by launching the (i) Development Assistance Strategy (DAS), (ii) Sector Working Groups (SWGs), and (iii) the Aid Management Platform (AMP). Further, under the leadership of Government, and in the interest of enhancing mutual accountability, Government and development partners consolidated an aid co-ordination calendar for 2009.

The aim of this document is twofold: (i) Evaluate the implementation of the Aid Co-ordination Calendar 2009, and (ii) generate a set of policy recommendations to guide the formulation of present and future policy commitments between Government and development partners.

Section 1 outlines the structure of the Aid Co-ordination Calendar 2009. Finally, section 2 evaluates the calendar's implementation, while providing a set of policy recommendations to further align Government and donor operations to the principles of the PD (2005) and the AAA (2008).

Section 1: The structure of the Aid Co-ordination Calendar 2009

The Aid Co-ordination Calendar identifies the following 12 key activities:

1. Establish DPs funding commitment for next FY;
2. Training of DFAs in AMP + Review Aid Data Management System;
3. CABS Annual Review;
4. Sector Working Group (SWG) quarterly meeting;
5. Joint High Level Meeting on Aid Co-ordination;
6. Indicative Schedule of Missions;
7. Mission Free Period;
8. Quarterly Project Implementation Monitoring Report;
9. Mid-Year Debt and Aid Report;
10. Annual Debt and Aid Report;
11. Annual Report on Extra-Budgetary Support;
12. Joint Sector Annual Reviews;
13. MGDS Annual Review;
14. Publication of Aid Co-ordination Calendar.

Table 1 provides a clear timeframe for each of these activities, as agreed between Government and development partners in 2008.

Section 2: Implementing the Aid Co-ordination Calendar 2009

The Aid Co-ordination Calendar 2009 served as an excellent benchmark in support of Government and development partners' commitment to the PD (2005) and the AAA (2008). The evaluation presented below suggests a completion rate of 66%. This number represents the average completion status for each activity across the calendar.

Above and beyond the successful completion of each individual activity, the process of developing this calendar provided an important opportunity to enhance the channels of communication between the Government of Malawi and its development partners. This strengthened working relationship was fostered and further consolidated through the Heads of Co-operation (HoC) co-ordination group.

Table 2 provides a detailed account of implementation for each activity captured in the Aid Co-ordination Calendar 2009.

Table 2: Implementation Review (by Activity)

Activity 1 Establish donor funding commitment for next FY	Brief description DAD/MoF to liaise with development partners for Part 1 projections.	Responsible party DAD/MoF/DPs
<p>Completion status: 50%</p> <p>Implementation remarks: The required information on part 1 projections for donor funding was timely requested by DAD/MoF. Donor responses, however, were characterized by a great deal of variation, with a number of development partners reporting in a timely fashion, and others failing to submit any reliable financial projections.</p> <p>In addition to donors' inability to provide timely and accurate data, part explanation for Government's failure to gather and effectively utilise reliable part 1 projections in the preparation of the national budget originated from Government's poor internal co-ordination.</p> <p>DAD/MoF and the Ministry of Development Co-operation and Planning (MoDPC), through the PSIP process, independently provided the Budget Division/MoF with data on part 1 projections. As a direct result, the Budget Division/MoF found itself with two conflicting sets of data. Notwithstanding the availability of this data, the Budget Division/MoF was unable to use it to its full potential.</p> <p>Policy recommendations: Timely submission of donor funding commitments by DPs. In addition, improved collaboration between DAD/MoF, the MoDPC and the Budget Division/MoF has the potential to yield the desired outcome. Early indications in FY2009/2010 show enhanced efforts to strengthen this working relationship.</p>		

Activity 2 Training of DFAs in AMP + Review Aid Data Management	Brief description Donor Data Focal Agents (DFAs) are expected to submit timely aid flow data to the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance will be responsible for organizing targeted training sessions aimed at familiarizing DFAs with the AMP's data entry function.	Responsible party DAD/MoF
<p>Completion status: 100%</p> <p>Implementation remarks: DAD/MoF conducted its planned bi-annual trainings sessions in a timely and effective fashion. The sessions were very well attended by donors, who gave positive feedback on the events. These efforts, combined with improved collaboration between MoF/DAD and donors as well as enhanced data verification procedures within MoF/DAD have resulted in significant improvements in terms of both quantity and quality of the monthly financial data used to populate the AMP.</p> <p>MoF/DAD also held 2 specific UN training sessions to try and address the limited reporting habits of many UN agencies. Unfortunately, these training sessions were poorly attended with 3 and 2 agencies attending each session, respectively. In response, MoF/DAD made renewed offers to all UN agencies to provide individual training sessions at the time and place of their convenience – although, this offer is yet to be utilised.</p> <p>Policy recommendations: The general DFA training sessions were constructive and very well attended, with most DPs represented. These efforts are yielding excellent returns in terms of improving AMP management and utilization.</p> <p>The United Nations agencies, however, continue to face the biggest challenges in terms of reporting habits. Given their contribution to overall disbursements this continues to undermine the AMP system and reduces the Government's ability to effectively manage and monitor aid flows. Greater commitment on this issue by the UNCT will be required in support of the aid effectiveness agenda in Malawi.</p>		
Activity 3 CABS Annual Review	Brief description CABS reviews aim to evaluate progress in improving Public Financial management (PFM). Representation will be at the level of the Heads of Delegation, Heads of Mission and Resident Representatives of all the development assistance organizations active in Malawi.	Responsible party DAD/MoF
<p>Completion status: 100%</p> <p>Implementation remarks: On target.</p> <p>Policy recommendations: The most recent CABS review served as an opportunity to underline the importance of a timely conduct of the reviews as a prerequisite for disbursement. Government and DPs agreed that the actual dates of future reviews ought to be agreed and fixed well in advance.</p>		

Activity 4 Sector Working Group (SWG) quarterly meeting	Brief description SWGs represent sectors' management structures. Participation in each SWG should include senior representatives from Government, development partners, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and the private sector.	Responsible party DAD/MoF/MoDPC/OPC/SWGs
<p>Completion status: 50%</p> <p>Implementation remarks: The Government of Malawi launched SWGs in November 2008. June 2009 marked Malawi's first joint learning event on SWGs/SWAp; this initiative aimed at building capacity at sector level to initiate the effective institutionalization of SWGs. The first wave of learning targeted 6 SWGs (i.e. Education, Water, Gender, Agriculture, Health, and Democratic Governance). Two additional waves to scale up this intervention to all 16 SWGs are expected to take place in March 2010.</p> <p>In view of the above, quarterly SWG meetings in all 16 sectors appear to be an over ambitious (and unrealistic) target. For the purpose of this evaluation, progress applies to the 6 sectors who benefited from the first Joint Learning Programme (JLP) on SWGs/SWAp.</p> <p>Notably, some sectors have made headway on their own, others have requested for additional assistance. Please find a brief summary below:</p> <p>(a) Health – The MoH is in the process of reviewing the SWAp. GDC has agreed and committed to support the health sector by providing an integrated expert to assist the SWAp secretariat in the design of phase II of the SWAp, and align their operational structures with the SWG guidelines.</p> <p>(b) Gender, Youth Development and Sport – This sector has taken it upon itself to design their SWG structure without any request for additional support. The first meeting of the TWG tasked to elaborate the structure of this SWG took place during the third week of July 2009, just a few weeks after the JLP event on SWGs/SWAp. Most recently, the sector has requested further assistance in facilitating the identification of a TA to help them through the early stages of establishing a functional SWG.</p> <p>(c) Water, Sanitation and Irrigation – This sector successfully launched a SWAp in December 2008. The SWAp implementation is experiencing a number of challenges. Following the joint learning event, the sector has shown a lot of interest in receiving further support to fine tune their existing structures to the SWG guidelines, and fully operationalise them.</p> <p>(d) Agriculture – This sector has shown a lot of interest to institutionalize a SWG in line with the SWG guidelines. After the JLP event, however, initiative has been lacking.</p> <p>(e) Democratic Governance – The SWG operational plan is in motion.</p> <p>(f) Education - Following the joint learning event, the sector has shown a lot of interest in receiving further support to fine tune their existing structures to the SWG guidelines, and fully operationalise them. The momentum appears to have been lost.</p> <p>As a caveat:</p> <p>(g) Trade, Industry and Private Sector Development – This sector has recently received support from ODI to assist in the institutionalization of the SWG. DPs are supportive of this agenda and are moving towards the establishment of a DP Trade, Industry and Private Sector Development group.</p>		

(h) Public Administration – UNDP has been recruiting an advisor for OPC. Part requirement of the ToR is the establishment of the PA SWG.

(i) Economic Governance – The PFEM secretariat seems keen to fine tune their operational structures to those suggested in the SWG guidelines.

Policy recommendations:

Most of the sectors who benefited from the first JLP event on SWGs/SWApS are in the process of developing their operational strategies. Slow implementation, however, poses reason for concern to all invested stakeholders.

Whereas the ultimate responsibility to institutionalise effective SWGs lies within the sectors themselves, central leadership to guide sectors through the process of establishing operational SWGs remains of fundamental importance.

This mandate clearly falls under the MoDPC. In view of the MoF’s involvement to date, it seems appropriate for the MoF to solidify its working relationship with MoDPC in support of a gradual, systematic, and complete hand-over of responsibilities. The follow up JLP events scheduled for March 2010 provide an important opportunity to invigorate this process.

Activity 5	Brief description	Responsible party
Joint High Level Meeting (HLM) on Aid Co-ordination	The High Level Meeting (HLM) on Aid Co-ordination is expected to deepen policy dialogue on key aspects of policy, planning and budgeting. Representation will be at the level of the Heads of Delegation, Heads of Mission and Resident Representatives of all the development assistance organizations active in Malawi, and Ministers and PSs that are relevant for the meeting’s agenda.	DAD/MoF

Completion status: 0%

Implementation remarks:

2008 and the beginning of 2009 witnessed a number of meetings between GoM and DPs leading to the first draft of the HLM ToR and code of conduct. No further progress to date.

Policy recommendations:

Following the publication of the Aid Co-ordination Calendar 2009, GoM and DPs agreed to reduce the number of HLMS expected to take place in a given year. It was also proposed that DAD and the HoC could jointly act as the HLM secretariat. This agenda needs to be revitalized, and concrete plans made for the organization of the first HLM.

Activity 6 Indicative Schedule of Missions	Brief description On a quarterly basis, DPs (through the HoC) should be in a position to provide Government with an indicative and consolidated schedule of planned missions requiring of Government's involvement.	Responsible party HoC
<p>Completion status: 0%</p> <p>Implementation remarks: To facilitate the HoC in complying with this task, DAD/MoF developed a mission classification and reporting quarterly template – See Annex I. No submissions were recorded in 2009.</p> <p>Policy recommendations: Timely submission of the mission classification and reporting quarterly template to DAD/MoF. The Government of Malawi strongly encourages DPs to undertake <i>joint missions</i>.</p>		
Activity 7 Mission Free Period	Brief description This mission free period aims to give Government officials time to focus on finalizing the national budget.	Responsible party DPs
<p>Completion status: 50%</p> <p>Implementation remarks: The Aid Co-ordination Calendar introduces a mission free period during the months of May and June to give Government officials time to focus on finalizing the national budget. DPs have shown clear efforts to reduce the number of missions during the budget preparation period.</p> <p>Policy recommendations: Notwithstanding a general tendency to reduce the number of missions during the months of May and June, a number of DPs require missions to take place during the budget preparation period (e.g. World Bank, ADB, IMF). Further discussions to reach an acceptable common ground between GoM and DPs are in order.</p>		
Activity 8 Quarterly Project Implementation Monitoring Report	Brief description This report provides an analysis on performance of active donor portfolio in terms of planned disbursement and outputs.	Responsible party DAD/MoF
<p>Completion status: 75%</p> <p>Implementation remarks: During 2009, DAD/MoF published one consolidated monitoring report for the first half of the year. A second report for the months of July-September has recently been completed and is expected to be published by February 2010.</p> <p>Policy recommendations: Shortage of human capacity continues to be identified as one of the key challenges underlying the belated publication of these quarterly project implementation monitoring reports. Recruitment of new staff over the past few months confirms GoM's commitment to strengthen its project monitoring efforts.</p>		

Activity 9 Mid-Year Debt and Aid Report	Brief description The mid-year report provides useful data on disbursements of aid and changes in the debt portfolio in the first half of the financial year.	Responsible party DAD/MoF
Completion status: 100% Implementation remarks: On target. Policy recommendations: Continued improvements in AMP management and utilization provide a solid platform for GoM to fulfill this commitment.		
Activity 10 Annual Debt and Aid Report	Brief description This report aims to provide data and information on the volume, distribution and effectiveness of foreign aid to Malawi. The report also provides the latest information on the public external and domestic debt portfolios.	Responsible party DAD/MoF
Completion status: 100% Implementation remarks: On target. Policy recommendations: Continued improvements in AMP management and utilization provide a solid platform for GoM to fulfill this commitment.		
Activity 11 Annual Extra-Budgetary Support to Malawi Report	Brief description Extra-budgetary support information isolated using data collected for the budget and the PSIP.	Responsible party DAD/MoF
Completion status: 100% Implementation remarks: This report has over the years been replaced by the Aid Atlas. The institutionalization of the Aid Atlas provides an important avenue to illustrate donor involvement at sector level, by capturing the level and breakdown of ODA disbursed in a given FY. Policy recommendations: A recent, and important, addition to the Aid Atlas has been the Quarterly Aid Disbursement Sector report. This document intends to strengthen the SWG process by providing a more regular tracking tool for the analysis of donor involvement at sector level.		

Activity 12 Annual Joint Sector Reviews	Brief description Annual Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) aim to evaluate sector performance in the face of jointly agreed indicators and targets. JSRs are expected to feed into the MGDS Annual Review.	Responsible party SWG
<p>Completion status: 50%</p> <p>Implementation remarks: In view of the implementation remarks for activity 4, it would only be fair to expect 6 sectors to have carried out annual joint sector reviews. Of the 6 sectors that benefited from the first wave of the JLP on SWGs/SWAs, Health, Education and Water successfully completed their annual reviews.</p> <p>Policy recommendations: The follow up learning events on SWGs/SWAs stand as an important opportunity to strengthen sector commitment to the principles outlined in the SWG institutionalization guidelines. The establishment of operational SWG structures are expected to facilitate the process of planning such joint reviews with all invested stakeholders.</p>		
Activity 13 MGDS Annual Review	Brief description The MGDS Annual Review aims to evaluate progress in the implementation of the MGDS.	Responsible party MoDPC
<p>Completion status: 100%</p> <p>Implementation remarks: The MGDS Annual Review is well under way, and a draft document is expected to be presented to all PSs in January 2010.</p> <p>Policy recommendations: The MGDS Annual Review process has suffered from the slow institutionalization of SWGs. This evidence provides further support for the policy recommendations captured under Activity 4.</p>		
Activity 14 Aid Co-ordination Calendar	Brief description Publish new Aid Co-ordination Calendar	Responsible party DAD/MoF
<p>Completion status: 50%</p> <p>Implementation remarks: The Aid Co-ordination Calendar 2010 has been drafted. The process of developing it started in December 2009, leaving some DPs dissatisfied with the depth of consultations (or lack thereof).</p> <p>Policy recommendations: The effective implementation of Malawi's aid effectiveness agenda is highly dependent upon the successful and timely completion of all commitments captured in the Aid Co-ordination Calendar. In view of the above, GoM held off the printing of a new calendar to accommodate DPs' contributions into the existing draft. The new calendar is due for publication in February 2010.</p>		

ANNEX I: Mission Classification and Reporting – Quarterly Template

Activity/Project	Mission Category [‡]	Mission Type [‡]	Level of Engagement	Dates
ADB				
1.				
2.				
3.				
World Bank				
1.				
2.				
3.				
Ireland				
1.				
2.				
3.				
... ..				

[‡] In support of the implementation of the DAS and the aid co-ordination calendar, the HoC is in the process of developing an improved system for the classification of DP missions. The current proposal, outlined below, identifies four categories of missions. This proposal is founded on the classification of donor missions according to purpose and level of engagement with Government.

Mission Category	Mission Type
A	High Level Visits: Highest Level visits by officials from DP Head Offices, including Ministers, senior management, officials with primary management accountability for Malawi. Discussions would generally concern strategic relationship issues rather than planning and/or implementation.
B	Project Support Missions: The bulk of current missions. Include visits, normally by teams involved in program/project identification/scoping, project appraisal, negotiations, mid-term reviews, project restructuring, and implementation support/supervision.
C	Technical Visits: Generally short visits by individual staff looking to interact with either line Ministries, PIUs, or GoM agency staff on detailed aspects of particular projects (E.g. follow up on well defined aspects of project development/implementation, workshop attendance or facilitation, audits, procurement reviews, research).
D	Internal support visits: Staff visits primarily internal to DP operations (administration, HR, internal evaluations, auditors).