



In association with the *Chr. Michelsen Institute*

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# Can we demonstrate the difference that Norwegian Aid makes?

**Evaluation of results measurement and how this can be  
improved**

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Date: **September 2014**



# Overview

Purpose of the assignment

Methodology

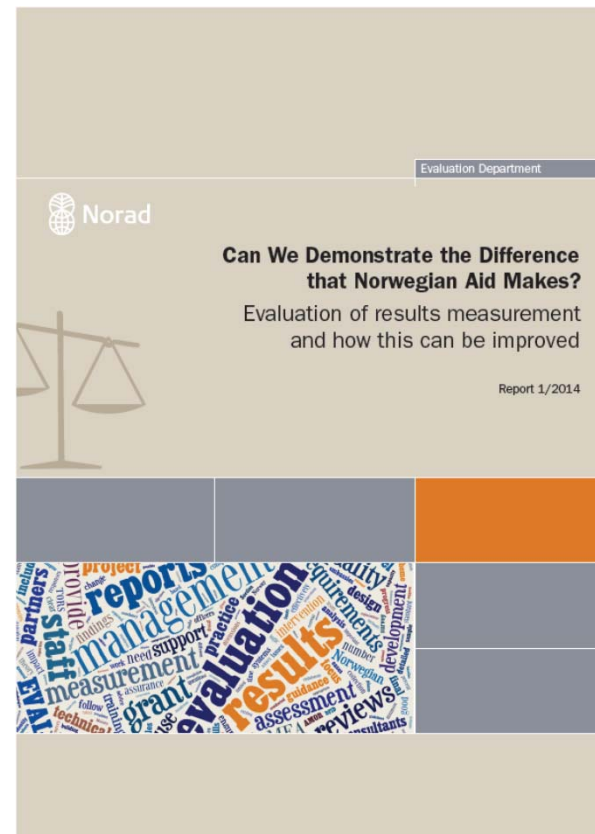
Findings

Key reflections

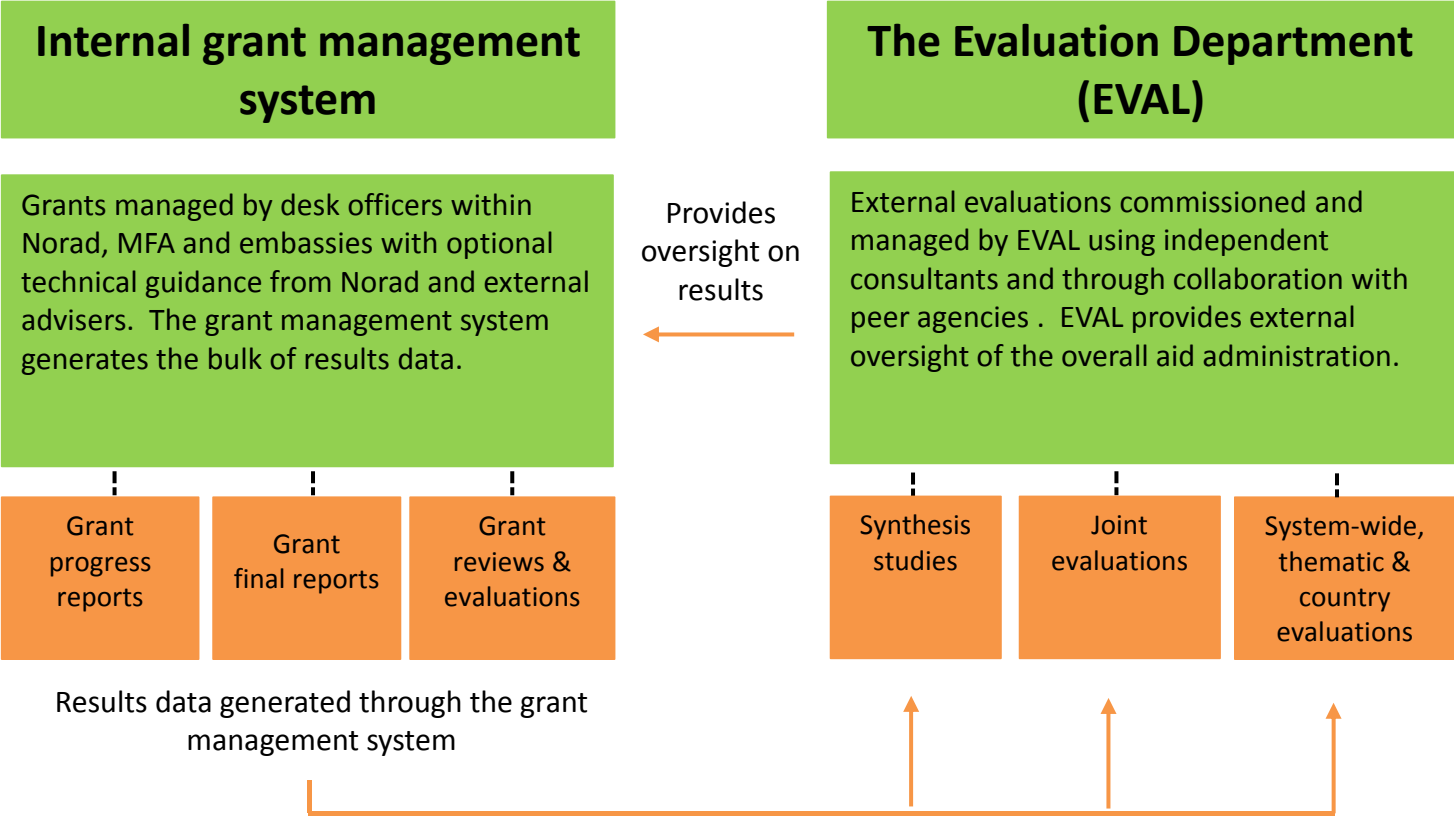


# Purpose of the assignment

- Norad's Evaluation Department (EVAL) found *'none of the evaluations and studies commissioned by EVAL and finalised in 2011 could report sufficiently on results at the level of outcomes or impact'*
- Why? What are the factors and dynamics ?



# Structure of the results measurement system



# Hypotheses – testing the system

1. Internal **policies, systems and procedures** ... provide appropriate and comprehensive guidance
2. Staff receive appropriate **training** and **technical advice/support....**
3. The policies, systems and procedures ... are being **correctly and adequately implemented**
4. The **planning, commissioning** and **quality assurance** of evaluations places an emphasis on measuring results
5. Evaluators have adequate **competencies** to effectively measure results and find/use evidence

# Methodology

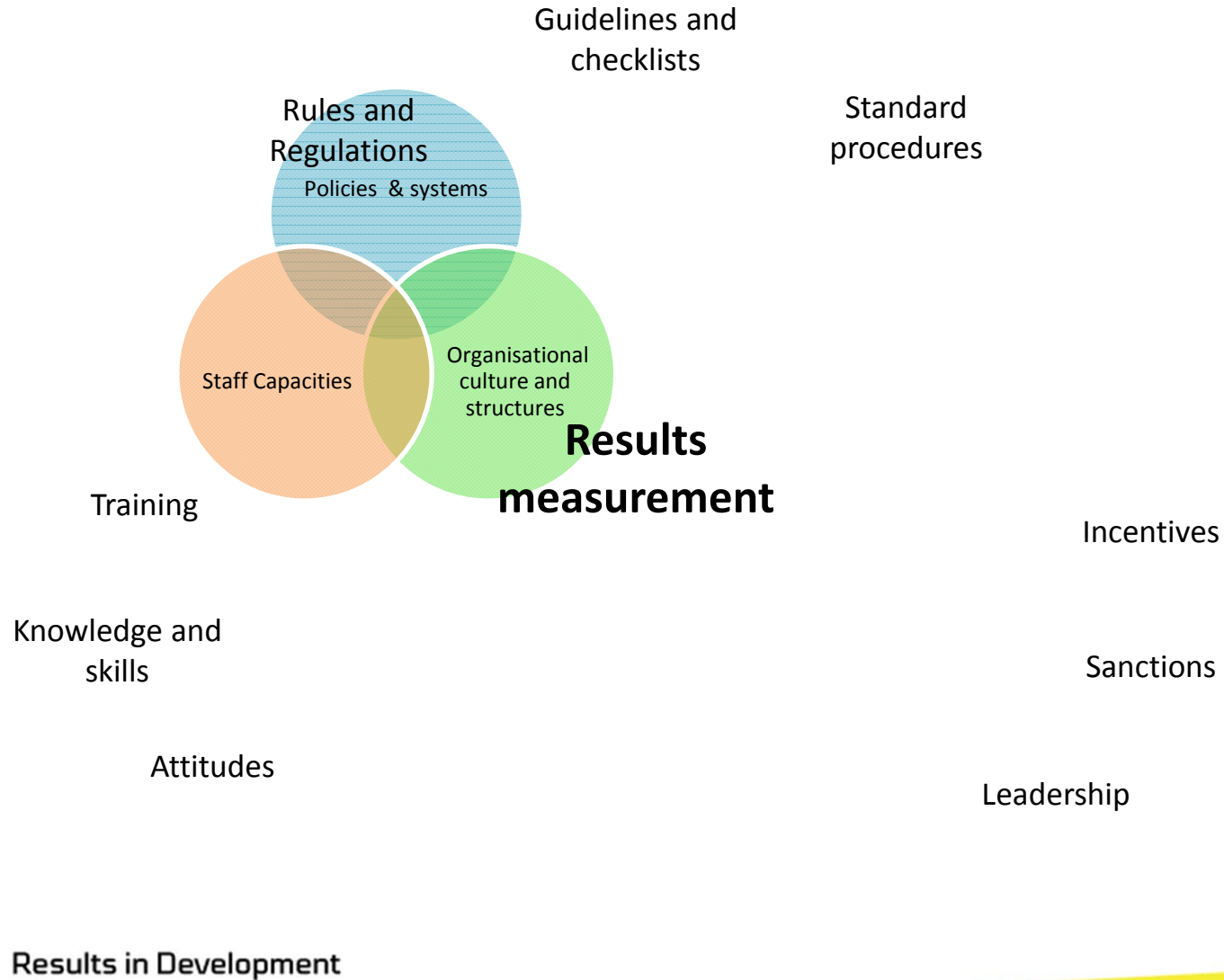
## **Assessment of grant management system**

- Desk-based assessment of policies and guidelines
- Assessment of courses, training and capacity building of staff
- Review of grant management processes including quality assurance
- Comparative review of approaches at the World Bank, DFID and Danida
- Review of current practice through a sample of recent grants
- Quality assessment of sample of grant level reviews and evaluations
- Interviews, group discussion and a survey of staff to explore current practice and opinions

## **Assessment of EVAL planning, commissioning and management of evaluations**

- Quality assessment of a sample of evaluation reports
- Interviews with evaluation managers and evaluation team
- Survey of evaluators' competencies

# Analytical framework





# KEY FINDINGS

Results in Development





*Hypothesis 1 - Internal policies, systems and procedures to ensure evaluability and results documentation in the grant management process provide appropriate and comprehensive guidance*

- **There are gaps in the minimum standards required from grant applicants about how they plan to measure results which make it difficult for grant managers to make an informed judgement on the quality of their approach and to ensure evaluability**
- **Development of grant scheme rules and a new Grant Management Manual could have improved consistency and coherence around results measurement. But the non-mandatory use of templates means there are no clear standards.**
- **There is an absence of a clear strategic approach to and guidance on reviews and evaluations which means their use within the grant management cycle is *ad hoc* and their quality variable**

*Hypothesis 2 - Staff receive appropriate training and technical advice/support to effectively ensure evaluability and results documentation as part of the grant management process*

- **Training on results measurement is generally of a good quality, with high staff satisfaction. However:**
  - Gaps in content
  - Short duration courses
  - Low attendance levels
  - Not a useful career move
  - Little other practical guidance
- **The institutional arrangements for technical support and QA on result measurement are not set up in a way that ensures consistent quality across the system**
  - QA/technical advice mandatory in only a minority of grant schemes and is little used
  - Decision on whether to seek QA at the discretion of the programme officer
  - When technical support is provided is lacks clear judgement on quality
  - Sector specialists often don't have skills in results measurement

*Hypothesis 3 - The policies, systems and procedures that are in place (to ensure interventions are evaluable and robust results data are being collected) are being correctly and adequately implemented*

- **The current rules and guidance on results measurement in grant management are not being adequately implemented**
- **Staff are under pressure and in many instances find themselves unable to devote the attention necessary to improve specification of results for a number of reasons:**
  - Lack of time
  - Lack of prioritisation by leadership (particularly in the MFA)
  - Lack of incentives and sanctions
- **Concern to follow the post- Paris harmonisation agenda and use partners' own systems appears to have held back constructive dialogue about results measurement**

## *Hypothesis 4 - The planning, commissioning and quality assurance of evaluations places an emphasis on measuring results*


- **Evaluations designed by EVAL often do not put sufficient emphasis on gathering evidence about results, particularly during the planning and commissioning phase.**  
**Notably:**
  - ToRs contain too many evaluation questions; there is ambiguity in the required methodologies;
  - Specification of the required skills among consultants is also poor.
- **EVAL does not have a systematic active management towards ensuring evaluation consultants remain focused on measuring results.**
  - Hands-off approach to managing evaluations has not been conducive to ensuring consistent quality.
  - Limited interaction during the evaluation lead to missed opportunities for correcting deviations between the ToR/proposal and the final report.
- **Evaluations directed towards outcomes and impacts do not have the necessary design features to ensure an outcome/impact assessment is delivered.**
  - The specification of methodologies, data requirements and competencies of evaluators are not in line with the requirements for outcome and impact evaluations.

*Hypothesis 5 - Evaluators have adequate competencies to effectively measure results and find/use evidence*

- **Necessary competencies are not expressed clearly in the ToRs**
- **A majority of the consultants have substantial experience with evaluation, have formal qualifications in the discipline and have a solid foundation in the application of core evaluation approaches and tools. However there are large gaps between competency and application**
- **Few evaluators have adequate competencies to measure results at impact levels, but evaluators have been assessed as competent for the ToRs as tendered**

# Conclusions for each hypothesis

<b>Hypothesis 1</b> - Internal policies, systems and procedures to ensure evaluability and results documentation in the grant management process provide appropriate and comprehensive guidance	<b>Rejected</b>
<b>Hypothesis 2</b> - Staff receive appropriate training and technical advice/support to effectively ensure evaluability and results documentation as part of the grant management process	<b>Rejected</b>
<b>Hypothesis 3</b> - The policies, systems and procedures that are in place (to ensure interventions are evaluable and robust results data are being collected) are being correctly and adequately implemented	<b>Rejected</b>
<b>Hypothesis 4</b> - The planning, commissioning and quality assurance of evaluations places an emphasis on measuring results	<b>Rejected</b>
<b>Hypothesis 5</b> - Evaluators have adequate competencies to effectively measure results and find/use evidence	<b>Unproved</b>



# ‘Can we demonstrate the difference that Norwegian aid makes?’

There are some elements of good foundations for better results measurement, but current arrangements lack the **strength of leadership, depth of guidance** and **coherence of procedures** necessary for effective evaluation of Norwegian aid



# KEY REFLECTIONS

Results in Development





# Key reflections – seeing results measurement from a systems perspective

- Tinkering around the edges of the Norwegian grant management system will not make a difference.
- The evaluation identified deficiencies in a wide range of areas:
  - a lack of coherence in the procedures
  - inadequate guidance
  - inconsistent leadership
  - inadequate incentives
  - organisational culture that has allowed being partner led to hold back constructive dialogue about results measurement.
- What we identified was a weak system and what is required is system wide change.

# Key reflections – consistent, but flexible QA

- The Norwegian approach to QA is too ad hoc. The person managing the grant decides whether a results framework or grant level evaluation should be quality assured.
- However, need some flexibility. Staff are managing over two thousand grants in year, all of variables sizes and complexity,
- Proportionality is key
- Our recommendation:
  - a financial threshold should be used where grants above a certain amount receive formal QA, while those below are QAed through a different approach.
  - the central Quality Assurance department should be better resourced to conduct its quality assurance of results frameworks
  - a new cadre of results advisers to be created that sit within teams that can provide more informal technical support and QA to smaller sized grants

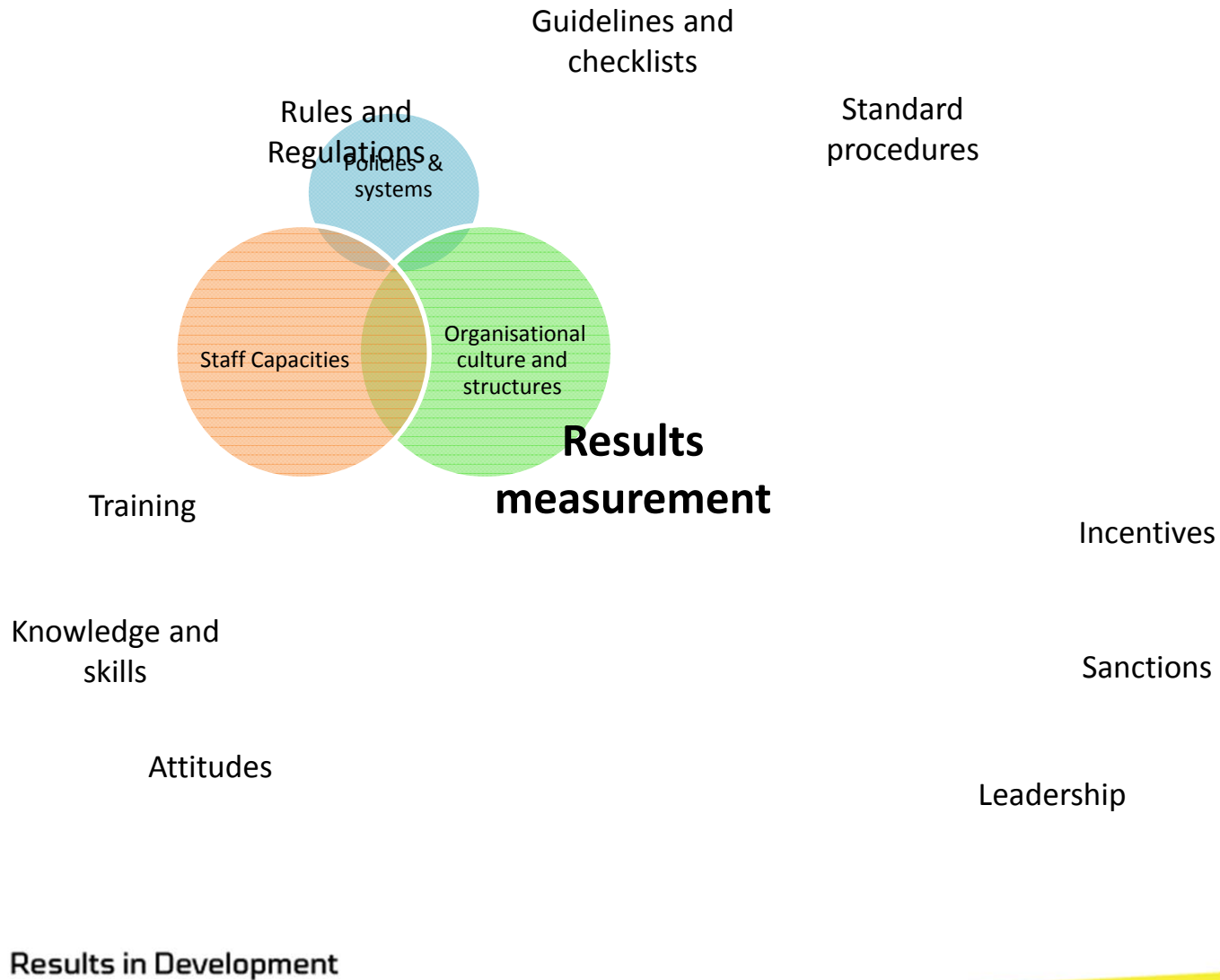
# Key reflections – the importance of good monitoring data to good evaluation

- Not surprising that EVAL evaluations fail to describe results: Results are not being consistently monitored at grant level. This makes it very difficult for the Evaluation Department to conduct robust strategic evaluations looking across multiple grants.
- Good evaluation is difficult (and costly) in the absence of good routine monitoring data.
- Need to be driving up standards in M as well as E

# Key reflections – the enabling conditions for a partner-led approach

- Time has to be invested before a grant is disbursed to ensure that partners have the internal capacity and systems to effectively measure results
- Staff need the time to monitor results reports and understand the approaches taken and the quality of the findings
- Staff need a high level of competency in results measurement – they will need to interrogate results frameworks and data, and engage with partners around whether their proposed systems are good enough
- In the absence of clear organising structures, a strong set of incentives (and leadership) have to be in place to ensure a focus on results measurement

# Analytical framework





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Thank you for listening

Any Questions?

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