

# How effectively were the Paris principles applied to state-building in South Sudan?

UN Photo/Evan Schneider

## KEY FINDINGS

- The five Paris principles of effective aid were only nominally successfully implemented in the state-building process of South Sudan.
- While the importance of the first principle, ownership, was highlighted in development plans in Southern Sudan, capacity limitations restricted the role of the local government in the overall process.
- Alignment, harmonization, results and mutual accountability were accorded importance in development strategies on paper. In reality, however, none of these principles have been fully implemented.

In January of 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was brokered in Southern Sudan, ending years of protracted civil conflict. This important agreement paved the way for semi-autonomy of the Republic of South Sudan from Republic of the Sudan. With the assistance of foreign aid to facilitate institutional development and capacity building, local leaders set about constructing a system which would eventually be used to govern the independent state of South Sudan.

2005 was also a significant year for the international donor community, as the traditional approach to international aid was re-evaluated, and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness officially adopted. The guidelines outlined in this declaration, known as the Paris principles, outlined five core principles for effective aid: ownership, alignment, harmonization, results and mutual accountability. Donor activities in South Sudan were some of the first to be, at least on paper, based on the five Paris principles, and as such make for an interesting case study of how well the principles are implemented in practice.

## 1. Ownership

Local government ownership of development initiatives and interventions was outlined as an important part of effective aid packages to Southern Sudan by many donors. However the region lacked essential government capacity to effectively participate in this process, resulting in a situation where donor partners routinely developed strategies that were approved without question by the local government. This created a very complex ownership situation in which the South Sudanese government was often only present at the start of the planning process, returning only at the end to approve whatever plans the donors had formulated. This effectively meant that ownership existed on paper, but not in practice.

However, there were some successes in achieving local ownership. The multilateral Joint Assessment Mission of 2004 prioritized indigenous issues and concerns, and was outlined even before the majority of development agencies had initiated activities in the region and was focussed on improving local institutions. The Juba Compact, on the

other hand, was a direct local government appeal for donor support to help confront the food price crisis of 2009 and involved setting up local mechanisms for dealing with a wide scope of issues such as fiscal sustainability, and good governance.

## 2. Alignment

Principle 2 of the Paris Declaration calls for donors to align their objectives with those of local actors. In Southern Sudan, the sheer number of parallel actors (e.g.



Downtown Juba, business district, South Sudan.  
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donors, contractors, NGOs and other foreign ‘implementing partners’) that functioned outside made aligning their numerous priorities and goals with those of the local government a very difficult task. Again while donors do appear to be committed to alignment on paper, these commitments have failed to materialize in most cases.

### 3. Harmonization

Harmonization of donor activities to share information and avoid duplication was also underscored as an important component of effective aid by the Paris Declaration. In Southern Sudan, donors thus established several co-ordination mechanisms and information sharing also occurred through informal information exchanges. Unfortunately, harmonization was not realized in most cases due to the complexity of the donor landscape and the large number of pending projects being discussed at any given time.

### 4. Results

The measurement of results is critical to determining aid effectiveness. However in the post-conflict situation of Southern Sudan it was enough that development interventions were almost universally perceived as positive due to the dire starting position of the region. Consequently, more attention was placed on ‘getting the job done’ than on implementing effective monitoring and evaluation strategies. In cases where results analysis was performed, it was chiefly done by donors interested in their own results-oriented reporting and was rarely shared with their local government counterparts. As the situation in South Sudan improves donors should focus on developing better monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

### 5. Mutual accountability

Donors and partners must be mutually accountable for development results according to the fifth principle of the Paris Declaration. In Southern Sudan however, there were few mechanisms to deter bad performance by either the local government or donors. Complaints abound on the local government side as well as the donor side: the government has complained about a lack of transparency, the use of parallel systems, and the inefficient use of funds on the part of donors. In contrast, donors have highlighted the

government’s poor record in fighting corruption, nepotism and enacting legislation. Despite an on-paper commitment to tackle these issues, there has been little will on either side to promote substantial reforms.

### The limited success of the Paris principles in South Sudan

As the table below starkly lays out, while the five Paris principles were important “on paper”, in South Sudan they were not successfully implemented in practice.

Principle	On Paper	In practice
Ownership	Yes	Mixed
Alignment	Yes	No
Harmonization	Yes	No
Results	Yes	No
Mutual accountability	Yes	No

Fragile and complex environments demand innovative, idiosyncratic approaches– in practice, not just on paper. Subsequent meetings in Accra and Busan have examined the specific cases of fragile states such as South Sudan and have underscored the importance of taking into account the local country context when attempting to apply the principles of the Paris Declaration.

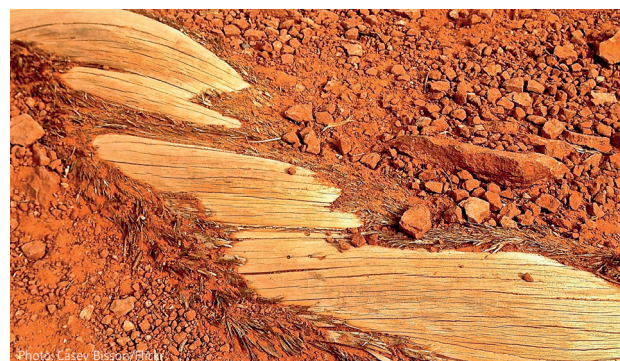


Photo: Casey Biscardi

### IMPLICATIONS

- Fragile and complex environments such as Southern Sudan demand innovative, idiosyncratic approaches – in practice, not just on paper.

*This Research brief is based on WIDER Working Paper 2013/141 'South Sudan: The road from the Paris Declaration to the reality of Juba, 2005-11' by Greg Larson.*

