

Briefing Note Result Chains

Result chains

In an effort to improve planning, link interventions to results, and make performance monitoring more systematic, practitioners of MfDR regularly use results chains.

Results chains are logic diagrams showing the strategies and linking inputs, outputs, outcomes and the impact to which they contribute.

(OECD Policy Brief, March 2009).

This briefing note highlights some of the key characteristics of result chains and their importance for managing for Development Results.

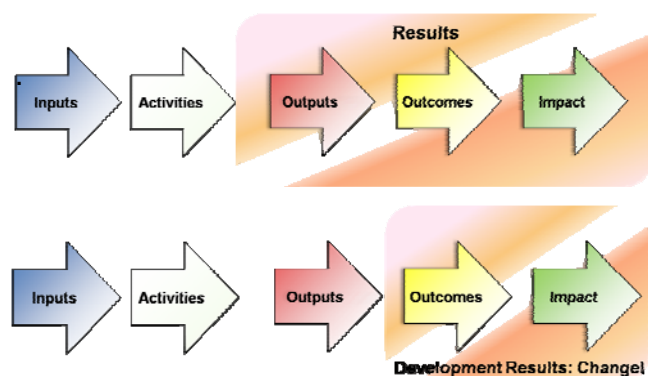


Figure 1. Results chains - the basic model: linking interventions with results

While developing the results chain, some practitioners stay quite close to the first column of the logical framework, the so-called intervention logic. Results chains make use of the basic characteristics of this intervention logic:

- Both are logic diagrams (linking interventions with change for beneficiaries)
- Both distinguish different types of results

However, results chains provide two important advantages, compared to the intervention logic in the logical framework:

1. Results chains may very well capture the change process better, since additional steps (more levels of outputs, outcomes, impact) can be easily incorporated/visualised. A flexibility which is welcomed by MfDR practitioners.
2. Development partners can position themselves in country results chains (ownership and alignment!) and make clear how they envisage contributing to improved country outcomes.

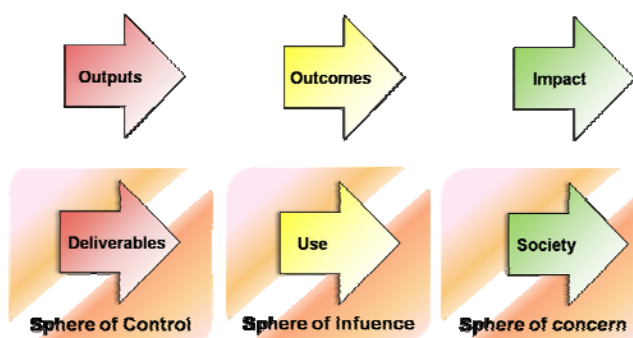


Figure 2. Distinction different types of results

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Why?

The policy brief mentions four areas of concrete actions on MfDR at the country level, among which: Shared Goals and Strategies. The use of results chains is acknowledged to considerably support this area of action by:

- Logically link interventions with change for beneficiaries (outcomes!);
- Offering flexibility to adjust to more complex change processes;
- Offering the possibility to development partners to position themselves in country programmes.

Results chains- as logic diagrams

Results chains are logic diagrams aligning resources-activities and even outputs with (country) outcomes. As such, goals are being made explicit and can be made subject to dialogue.

The levels in the chain facilitate the positioning of actors and as such supports transparency and accountability. While at the output level, “deliverables” are being considered over which implementing actors normally have a reasonable level of control, at the outcome level, we clearly are at the sphere of influence. Actors need to make explicit that their proposed deliverables are likely to contribute to the desired outcomes (plausibility). This plausibility depends largely on the quality of the context and needs analysis.

Results chains – more flexible diagrams

There is no obligation to limit the results chains to a specific number of levels and as such results chains offer a good opportunity to capture the change process better than the relatively limited intervention logic. Below this is visualised.

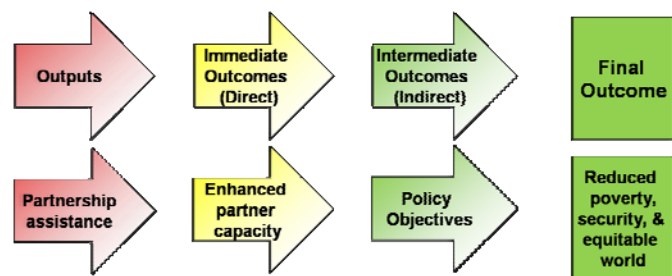


Figure 3. Flexible diagrams: more output and/or outcome levels can be incorporated

Once the different strategies start to influence/strengthen each other, the model also becomes less linear, one of the serious complaints towards the logical framework approach.

This makes results chains also more attractive, since they can be adjusted to more complex change processes. Of course, being a model to facilitate planning and, at a later stage, monitoring and evaluation, the number of different levels should remain manageable and thus limited.

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Results chains – partnership diagrams

A very interesting possibility with results chains is to visualise how development partners envisage contributing to country outcomes and country strategies.

Below this is visualised.

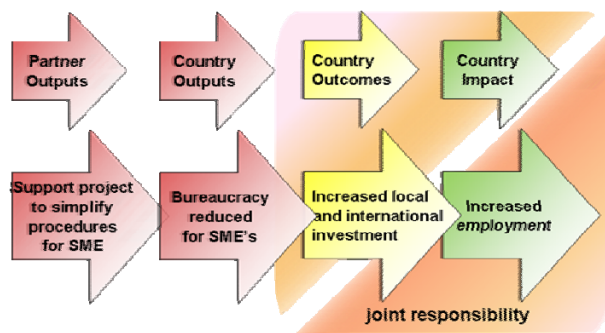


Figure 4. Development partners can position themselves in country result chains

The example in figure 4 shows how Managing for Development Results (among others, based on the concepts of ownership and alignment) can be supported by results chains:

a development partner contributes with a concrete project analysing and recommending simplification of procedures for SME's to the government strategy to strengthen local businesses by reducing the bureaucracy.

Deliverables of development partners (their outputs) can be clearly positioned in Country results chains. Moreover, it becomes clear for which outcomes a clear joint responsibility exists. This is, of course, important in the context of transparency and accountability.

Conclusion

Results chains logically link input, outputs, outcomes and impact. Results chains can be flexibly used by different development actors enabling them to capture the change process and their contributions to this process.

Therefore, results chains are a central tool in MfDR efforts to define shared goals and objectives, dialogue on results, align PM&E with results and a good starting point for performance based budgeting.