

# An Exploration of Project Approaches for International Development Projects

*Full Paper*

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to explore different project management approaches used in International Development (ID) projects. The study's findings reveal several ID-specific project management approaches applied in practice. Whilst some of these have not been well-documented in literature (e.g. the Collaborating, Learning and Adapting Approach [CLA] and Capacity Works), others are well researched (e.g. Project Cycle Management, Result-Based Management, and Project Management for Development Professionals). Surprisingly, while Project Management for Development appears extensively in literature, our research sample reveals its non-use in practice. Reasons for its non-use in our sample remain uncovered however, the study shows the significant power and influence that Donors have on which project management approaches are applied in ID projects - as they develop new approaches which are improved upon whilst ID projects are running.

**Keywords:** International Development Projects (ID projects), Project Management Approach, Project Management Methodology, NGO

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

International Development (ID) organisations work across borders to implement societal development projects with the aim of improving living conditions in developing countries (Youker, 2003). According to Diallo and Thuillier (2005), most international assistance provided by governmental or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are provided via projects. Montes-Guerra, De-Miguel, Pérez-Ezcurdia, Ramos & Díez-Silva (2015) describe ID projects as “*a proposal of activities organized around a specific objective, to perform in a certain period of time, in a defined geographical area, for a group of beneficiaries, with the aim of solving specific problems or improving a situation*” (p.56). There are a wide range of project funders (foreign aid departments of developed nations, philanthropists and intergovernmental organisations) collectively termed as *project donors*. Aside from project donors, there are a wide range of stakeholders involved in ID projects including implementers, local governments, consultants, trainers, researchers and NGOs (Youker, 2003).

ID projects across the globe have high failure rates. The McKinsey-Devex report states, 64% of donor-funded projects result in failure (Hekala, 2012). Similarly in 2014, the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) reported approximately 54% of International Finance Corporate (IFC) development investments were considered a failure (IEG, 2014). As a result, ID project success is often viewed as an exception (Ika, Diallo, & Thuillier, 2011). Whilst there are debates on the ineffectiveness of aid (Easterly, 2009), other reasons may be attributed to these failure rates. Given ID projects operate in complex environments tackling issues such as (i) an inherent lack of resources, (ii) complex stakeholder composition, (iii) ambiguity in goal and performance measurement (Crawford & Bryce, 2003; Ika & Donnelly, 2016; Youker, 2003); there is surprisingly limited literature on project management approaches associated with ID projects (Ika et al., 2011). Therefore, this study draws motivation from this lack of research with a view to understanding what approaches exist in the ID industry.

Project management is defined as a system of practices, techniques, procedures and rules used to guide a project towards success (PMI, 2017). Traditionally the concept of project success is linked to the ‘iron triangle’ of cost, time and quality (Atkinson, 1999) or more recently, the ‘triple constraint’ of time, scope and cost (Catania, Armstrong, & Tucker, 2013). Pollack, Helm and Adler (2018) describe the triple constraint to be an effective way to showcase the interrelationship between the three criteria. It is considered a constraint because movement of one criterion; for example, reducing project duration (time) can put pressure on other criteria. Failure within one constraint could have a negative impact on the other two (Mokoena, Pretorius, & Van Wyngaard, 2013). As a result, project managers often need to make trade-off decisions between the criterion to achieve the desired result. Alexander (2018) explains that if project management approaches are the right fit, they can be considered the first step toward enabling success, for example, by correctly utilising resources and ensuring the triple constraint is within control (Mejillano, Lively, & Miller, 2007). However, since all projects are unique, it has also been argued that the project approach needs to be tailored to the specific project requirements (Ika, 2012; Ika, Diallo, & Thuillier, 2010) and context. The definition therefore, for ‘project management approach’ encapsulates broader concepts and there is a tendency in literature to interchange methods. For the purpose of this study, the term project management approach is described as *any adopted guideline, methodology or tools and techniques utilised in ID projects that assist the project manager in reacting to different project contexts and requirements*.

## 1.2 Research Motivation

For ID projects, project donors provide guidelines as to which project management approaches and tools can be used in order to assist project managers. Some examples include; Logical Framework, Gantt Chart and Stakeholder Matrix utilised during project planning and implementation (Landoni & Corti, 2011). However, there is evidence that these approaches and tools are not correctly applied (Golini, Kalchschmidt, & Landoni, 2015; Montes-Guerra et al., 2015; Muriithi & Crawford, 2003). For example:

*“Progress reporting is not clearly applied”* (Montes-Guerra et al., 2015, p. 62) and

*“Reward and recognition systems that take their basis from western theories of motivation do not work because work values in Africa are different and not based on purposive/economic rationality”* (Muriithi & Crawford, 2003, p. 318)

According to Golini, Landoni, & Kalchschmidt (2017), ID projects have received limited attention in literature concerning use of project management approaches. Project management journals show that

IT, construction and civil engineering industries represent 24%, 21% and 21% of publications respectively (Urli & Urli, 2000). Contrarily, less research has been conducted on ID project management (Golini et al., 2015; Ika et al., 2011; Youker, 2003). This research aims to address this gap by expanding existing research into ID projects and in particular, focusing on ID project management approaches for which limited literature exists. Much literature exists on critical success factors (CSFs) for ID projects (Bayiley & Teklu, 2016; Hermano, López-Paredes, Martín-Cruz, & Pajares, 2013; Ika et al., 2011) and some research has discussed tools that are currently utilised (Golini et al., 2015; Ika et al., 2010). However, very little can be found on specific project management approaches for ID projects. Moreover, research by Golini and Landoni (2014), has highlighted that of the approaches available there is a need to integrate them in some way to find an approach that is best suited and revolutionary for the ID-project management industry.

### 1.3 Research Question:

As literature on project management approaches for ID projects are somewhat dispersed and inconsistent, this study aims to synthesise existing literature from various databases. Therefore, our research question (RQ) is:

***What project management approaches are currently used in ID projects?***

### 1.4 Research Method

To address the research question, this study conducts a detailed literature review consisting of peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, the NGO handbook on project management approaches (between the years 1970 and 2019) and one-to-one interviews with industry experts.

The study initially focused on peer-reviewed journals articles for ID-specific project management approaches. Where such approaches were cited in peer-reviewed journals, the researcher then expanded the search to related, similar titles included in conference proceedings and NGO handbooks. Literature investigation utilised extensive database searches including ScienceDirect, Wiley Online Library and ProQuest Central. Our motivation for looking to articles from the 1970s relates to the initial origination and development of various ID-specific project management approaches that took place during that time, hence, some of the original write ups regarding ID project management is dated from then. The Research Question was partially addressed via the literature review and later, further informed and validated via our data collection.

The data collection consisted of one-on-one, semi-structured skype and telephonic interviews with 10 project managers and officers with an average experience of 14 years (and standard deviation of 8.9 years with the highest being 32 years and lowest being 5 years). Six participants had formal project management training however four participants who did not receive any formal training still worked with ID projects for over 10 years and were therefore, included in the study. This helped the study in capturing real-life experiences and applicability of some of the approaches that have been theorised in literature. The selection criteria for participants included 'experience working in international development projects' and 'experience as project manager/officer for at least two years'. The justification for conducting 10 in-depth interviews was based on Sandelowki (1995) proposed principle: "an adequate sample size in qualitative research is one that permits the deep, case-oriented analysis that is a hallmark of all qualitative inquiry, and that results in a new and richly textured understanding of experience" (p. 183), particularly important for exploration. The participants worked in the following areas of international development: agriculture, human rights, renewable energy, health care, women's empowerment, maternal health, family planning, food security, skills development, formal education, vocational education, corporate governance, and disaster risk reduction; working across Asia and Africa in countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Ghana, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Rwanda, India, and the Philippines. The questions revolved around the different activities conducted by ID projects and detailed descriptions of the types of project management approaches they utilise. In addition to providing information through the interview, some participants provided additional reading materials which were also analysed to gain further insights about the applied approaches.

The study conducted thematic analysis to find common themes to develop the findings. In addition to thoroughly reading the transcripts to find themes, the researchers used Nvivo software to code these themes. NVivo 'nodes' were used to identify and organise common themes and create a hierarchy or relationship between the identified approaches. This helped us identify the literature or commercial name of the approaches where it was not easily recognisable. Once common themes were established the study cross compared information between participants to fortify the findings. Lastly, the

information collected from participant comments were cross analysed with additional reading material to draw firmer conclusions.

## 2 PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACHES USED

### 2.1 Introduction

Project management is a system of practices, techniques, procedures and rules used to guide a project towards success (PMI, 2017). As each project is unique with different cycles, requirements and aims the approaches should ideally be tailored; however, in practice a one-size-fits-all approach is often witnessed. However, depending on the specific needs of the project, project managers should choose the approach that best fits their project requirements (Ika et al., 2010; PMI, 2017) or mix approaches to form a hybrid (Ziółkowski & Deręgowski, 2014).

Tools and techniques are mechanisms embedded in a specific methodology to help a project run smoothly. However, the terms ‘approach’ and ‘methodology’ are used interchangeably in literature. A methodology is a detailed approach that provides a step-by-step guideline for project managers to apply. As discussed in section 1.1 for the purpose of this study an approach is described as *any adopted guideline, methodology or tools and techniques utilised in ID projects that assist project manager to react to different situations and requirements.*

### 2.2 Project Management in International Development Projects

This section discusses the history of ID-specific project management approaches and their importance. It refers to some of the commonly-used approaches as an example.

Project management from the context of international development is not as well researched as other industries (Diallo & Thuillier, 2005; Golini & Landoni, 2014; Ika, 2012; Khang & Moe, 2008). The literature on ID project approaches can be considered to be somewhat dispersed and inconsistent. For example, no one article discusses a composite list of approaches utilised across ID projects and not all articles discuss similar approaches. Therefore, the initial aim of this study is to create a literature base for the most dominant ID-specific project management approaches. Before delving into ID specific approaches, we first discuss the history of ID approaches and their importance.

As ID projects face higher socio-political complexity compared to other industries (Ika & Hodgson, 2014), it is necessary to cater a project management approach to the specific needs of ID projects rather than following a one-size-fits-all mentality (Ika, 2012; Matos, Romão, Sarmiento, & Abaladas, 2019). In 1969, the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) was developed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to manage USAID funded ID projects (NORAD, 1999). Then in 1978, Warren Baum from World Bank developed the Project Cycle Management (PCM) approach (Baum, 1978) (section 2.3.1). Although LFA was initially developed independently as a project approach in its own right, interestingly, the LFA is now considered to be a tool that is embedded within the PCM approach (Landoni & Corti, 2011). This is not surprising because as identified earlier, the terms ‘approach’, ‘methodology’, ‘tools and techniques’ are often used interchangeably in literature. For example, Result-Based Management (section 2.3.2), has been described as a tool for project management (Ika & Lytvynov, 2009) while it is considered to be a dedicated project approach by a large ID NGO (UN Habitat, 2017). Given the overlap of its application, this research will concentrate only on its approach-orientation and its impact in managing ID projects. Furthermore, history indicates donor organisations also develop ID-specific project management approaches (e.g. World Bank and USAID). According to the PMI, a project manager should tailor the approach to the project’s needs (PMI, 2017); However, in the ID industry the selection of project management approaches are frequently made by the donor organisation (Matos et al., 2019) and therefore, the choice of approach is not at the project manager’s discretion nor is it tailored to meet the specific project needs.

### 2.3 ID Specific Project Management Approaches from Literature

Table 1 shows a summary of literature sources on ID-specific project management approaches that have been widely studied. It must be noted there may be other approaches available; however, they are not as well studied.

Approach	Definition	Citation
Project Cycle Management (PCM)	Describes the managerial activities and decision-making procedures used during the life cycle of an ID project.	(Baum, 1970, 1978); (Landoni & Corti, 2011); (Golini, Landoni, & Kalchschmidt, 2017; Ika et al., 2010)
Result Based Approach (RBM)	A management approach that focuses on performance and the achievement of results (i.e. outputs, outcomes and impact).	Ika and Lytvynov (2009, 2011); (Örtengren, 2016); (International Committee of Red Cross, 2009); (Trowell, 1997); (Muzinda, 2016);(UN Habitat, 2017)
Project Management for Development Professional (PMD Pro)	An approach inspired by PmBoK, constituting a new specific framework for managing ID projects.	(Hermano et al., 2013); (Golini, Landoni, & Mozzi, 2012); (Nelson & Cropper, 2016); (Golini & Landoni, 2014); (Keleckaite & Meiliene, 2015)
Project Management for Development (PM4DEV)	A project management approach that is more focused on projects being adaptive and being able to work with uncertainties	(Ciaghi, Villafiorita, & Dalvit, 2014);(Keleckaite & Meiliene, 2015); (Golini & Landoni, 2014); (Golini et al., 2012)

*Table 1: Widely studied ID specific project management approach*

The following sub-sections discuss the three most commonly cited approaches in literature, namely, PCM, RBM and PMD Pro.

### 2.3.1 Project Cycle Management (PCM)

PCM is one of the pioneering project management approaches developed specifically for ID projects. Its origin dates to 1970 when Warren Baum was working for the World Bank. He developed the concept of 'Project Cycle' which outlines the steps that World Bank projects go through. The steps include: identification, preparation, appraisal, negotiations and supervision (Baum, 1970). In 1978, he further developed the concept and established the PCM approach that includes the following 6 stages: identification, preparation, appraisal, negotiation, implementation and supervision, and evaluation (Baum, 1978). One of the key tools used in PCM is the logical framework matrix which is a 5-by-4 matrix, commonly known as 'logframe' that is used for analysing and presenting projects goals and their assumptions (Crawford & Bryce, 2003).

The PCM approach has become standard practice in development agencies (Biggs & Smith, 2003) and widely adapted and reformulated by donor agencies to meet their project specific needs (Landoni & Corti, 2011). In some cases, the agencies do not definitively mention utilising PCM. For example, AusAid does not mention using PCM as an approach in their guidelines (Landoni & Corti, 2011), however, they utilise a similar framework containing six steps and also use the logical framework that has the same structure as PCM. Therefore, in some instances, use of PCM as an approach is more implied; by matching the project cycle and tools (i.e. LFA), the study is able to examine the approach utilised in said project. Due to the widespread adoption of PCM among donor agencies it is not surprising to find PCM to be the most widely used approach in practice (Biggs & Smith, 2003).

While analysing the Baum (1978) document an observation regarding the PCM approach is that it is more catered for donor agencies rather than for project implementers (NGOs or agencies who implement the project) as most of the activities are focused around donor responsibilities before providing funding. A possible explanation for this could be Baum's affiliation with World Bank at the time PCM was developed. Since he was working at the donor agency it was developed from that perspective (rather than the implementers). Therefore, it can be inferred from document analysis that some of the tools, techniques and suggestions made within the approach do not apply once the project is handed over to the implementers, but rather, catered to the needs of the donors prior to funding provision and project approval.

### 2.3.2 Result Based Management (RBM)

RBM is defined as "broad management strategy aimed at achieving important changes in the way government agencies operate, with improving performance (achieving better results) as the central orientation" (Binnendijk, 2000). On the other hand, United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (2017) defined RBM as "management strategies in individual United Nations system organizations based on managing for the achievement of intended organizational results by integrating a results philosophy and principles into all aspects of management and, most significantly, by integrating lessons learned from past performance into management decision-making" (p. v)

Research suggests RBM has multiple purposes. First, it has been considered as a performance measurement concept (Hulme, 2007) whilst others consider performance measurement a part of RBM (Binnendijk, 2000). Second, it has been considered a tool for project management (Ika & Lytvynov, 2011); third, it has been considered an approach for project management (International Committee of Red Cross, 2009; UN Habitat, 2017). These varying applications in prior research, make it difficult to determine the true applicability of RBM as it relates to ID projects. However, for the purpose of this research its application is considered holistically as an overall project approach.

A key feature of the RBM approach is its focus in ensuring results are achieved, which is evident from the way the project is identified to how it is monitored. In RBM, the process starts by selecting the desired outcome and then deciding which route to take; mapping it and then making required adjustments to achieve the desired outcome (UN Habitat, 2017). To map the process RBM uses the tool results chain which illustrates the causal relationship between various project elements over time. For example, if X is done, then Y will happen; if Y happens, Z is likely to happen (UN Habitat, 2017). A distinguishing factor of RBM is its unique take on project selection. Rather than focusing on available resources or issues, it focuses more on what they aim to achieve and then allocate resources accordingly. There are different RBM project cycle designs; for example, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has monitoring in the middle of the cycle (International Committee of Red Cross, 2009) while the United Nations Habitat has results as the centre of its focus within the cycle (UN Habitat, 2017). Since by definition RBM's central focus is on results, the study will use project sequences from UN Habitat.

RBM's unique take on project selection is also one of the most criticised areas. Ika and Lytvynov (2011) have argued that there is a strong focus on demonstrating results rather than managing the project; therefore, it discourages project workers to work on projects that are difficult to measure as it encourages the attitude "can't measure, shouldn't do" (Schacter, 1999, p. IV). This attitude can be particularly damaging for ID projects because most ID projects' performance and outcome measurement is difficult as most projects are 'soft' projects (Golini et al., 2015; Youker, 2003) therefore, performance measurement is difficult. As a result, many projects ideas might be overlooked due to their 'softness'. By analysing RBM documents (UN Habitat, 2017; International Committee of Red Cross, 2009) it appears to be more implementer-focused since the guidelines, tools and techniques presented in the handbook appeared more applicable to actual implementation and project management. A result-focused project management approach can be more beneficial for project managers in helping them achieve the desired outcome compared to other approaches that have a donor-orientation focus. Furthermore, the approach also encourages projects to constantly assess and learn whereby creating somewhat of a feedback loop. Therefore, there are hints of adaptability within the RBM.

### **2.3.3 Project Management for Development Professionals (PMD Pro)**

PMD Pro is an approach that has been recently developed by an organisation called PM4NGOs. This organisation has worked with several large NGOs (such as Oxfam, World Vision and Care International) to develop the PMD Pro (PM4NGOs, 2010). PMD Pro has been developed based on Project Management Body of Knowledge (PmBoK) Guide (Hermano et al., 2013; PM4NGOs, 2010); however, it adds new dimensions to cater for ID projects (Hermano et al., 2013). The life cycle looks very similar to the PmBoK approach (Golini & Landoni, 2014); however, some of the stages have been renamed and amended to tailor for the needs of ID projects.

PMD Pro approach's handbook is very informative as it covers a wide range of project management tools and techniques (e.g. schedule management, budget management, quality management and stakeholder management among others) (PM4NGOs, 2010); therefore, it provides strong guidance particularly for less experienced ID project managers. Due to its depth and breadth of information on project management specific to ID projects, it can be seen to represent the right path for improving ID projects' performance (Hermano et al., 2013). Lastly, PMD Pro guidelines encourages integrated project management; whereby the approach suggests project managers run projects in iterations and have a feedback loop. For example, during the project planning phase the guideline encourages project managers to embrace planning in iteration especially implementation planning and monitoring planning (PM4NGOs, 2010). However, the guide fails to discuss ways through which the project manager would be able to plan in iteration. Interestingly, the approach only mentions using iteration in planning rather than actually running the project. Therefore, it can be inferred that even though PMD Pro is adapted from PmBoK (a traditionally linear approach), there are also hints of adaptive ideologies within this approach.

### 3 FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Introduction

This section describes the findings that address our research question from primary data collection. The literature review found the following ID-specific project management approaches: PCM, RBM, PMD Pro and PM4DEV. Table 2 re-introduces these approaches providing a high-level overview of their application in practice based on our interview data. We also extend this further by reporting additional approaches found in practice that have not been strongly documented in literature to date.

Project management approach	Definition	Practice-utilisation: Findings
Project Cycle Management (PCM)	Describes the managerial activities and decision-making procedures used during the life cycle of an ID project.	All (10) study participants reported partial use of PCM
Result Based Management (RBM)	A management approach that focuses on performance and the achievement of results (i.e. outputs, outcomes and impact).	9 participants reported use of RBM in some projects
Project Management for Development Professionals (PMD Pro)	An approach inspired by PmBoK, constituting a new specific framework for managing ID projects.	2 Participants reported use and training of PMD Pro
Project Management for Development (PM4DEV)	A project management approach that is more focused on projects being adaptive and being able to work with uncertainties	0 participants reported use of PM4DEV

*Table 2: Finding on usability of project management approaches*

From table 2 we conclude that elements of PCM are applied in all projects. After PCM, RBM is the next most commonly utilised approach followed by PMD Pro. Lastly, PM4DEV seems to be the least used. In present study there was no reported usage of PM4DEV.

#### 3.2 Additional Project Management Approaches

Additional findings suggest donor organisations often develop approaches in-house and experiment with these approaches on their funded projects:

*“Currently, the approach we are following is very new in the ID field, only few projects in the world are following this approach. [...] since it is new our donor organisation is open to learning; hence we frequently provide feedback to them”*

(Participant 5).

*“Donors are learning too you know, they experiment with different approaches”*

(Participant 1)

These findings suggest alternative approaches that are not extensively prevalent in the literature review (Chapter 2). Since the approaches are still new to practitioners for ID projects, limited research currently exists. In order to analyse these approaches, the study utilised secondary data via company brochures that were supplied by the research participants as well as available information on donor organisations’ websites. As limited prior research has identified or discussed these approaches are relatively novel findings. The two most commonly discussed approaches are “Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting” (CLA) and “Capacity works” (CW). Below is the description and analysis of these approaches discussed by the research participants in present study.

##### 3.2.1 Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) Approach

According to Participant 5, their “current organisation follows a particular approach called CLA [...] which is relatively new [...] So, the donors created CLA and handed it over to a very limited number of projects in the world. [...] So, we provide inputs to the donor to improve the approach.” CLA was developed to improve the impact and management of development initiatives. Participant 1 states how “the name explains the approach a lot; the main focus is to collaborate with internal and external stakeholders, learning from the field and adapting as needed.” Being adaptive provides permission for the projects to tackle various unpredictable complications that come up during ID project stages. “By combining tools, processes and resources the approaches aim is to harness a culture of learning and adapting” (Participant 1). USAID Learn (2017) reports that by using CLA, it “reduces duplication through coordinating efforts and sharing knowledge”, “improves the effectiveness”, “enables adaptive

course corrections during implementation” and “facilitates country-led development and local investment” (p. 1)

Participant 5 describes how “CLA places heavy emphasis on the design phase because it is the foundation. [...] so, we have pilot projects where we try to learn and grab as much information before going full scale.” Based on Participants’ (1 & 5) comments and CLA user manual there is evidence of feedback loop in the approach. However, the feedback loop seems to be strongest during the initial planning and design phases as Participant 1 and 5 both reported flexibilities to change and adaptations decreases when the project progresses and expands.

### 3.2.2 Capacity Works (CW) Approach

CW is an approach developed by the German organisation – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). According to participant 9, the central focal point of CW is in achieving sustainability. Based on the reading material provided by participant 3, to be able to achieve the desired sustainability, the approach is structured around the following success factors: Strategy; Cooperation (building trust and negotiating for appropriate roles); steering structure; processes (clearly defined processes with clear guidelines) and finally, learning and innovation. These success factors have been described by the CW user manual (German Technical Cooperation, 2009) as follows: i) Strategy as having a clear plausible strategic orientation; ii) Cooperation as having a clear understanding of who the project cooperates with (stakeholders) and why; iii) Steering structure as taking decisions that favour the desired project managed structure (depending on the projects the desired structure varies); iv) Process as following stipulated process that has been tried and tested for managing and designing a project or intervention; v) learning and innovation as paying additional attention to harnessing learning with innovation to further improve project outcome (German Technical Cooperation, 2009).

Participant 9 explains: “CW has tools and techniques that have been tried and tested in various fields.” These tools “aid in making decisions in a methodological way. [...] The problem tree helps us get to the root of an issue while decision tree helps us make decisions” (Participant 3). However, the tools must be adapted to the context and project managers are required to have consultancy experience (German Technical Cooperation, 2009). Furthermore, as participant 9 reported, “CW is a process-oriented approach [...]. It stipulates what processes the project managers should go through to eventually reach the outcome.” Processes include project managers developing strategies that are well aligned with the project goals, creating a cooperative environment that ensure all actors of the project feel trusted and recognised (German Technical Cooperation, 2009).

## 4 CONCLUSION

This study focused on identifying ID-specific project management approaches used in practice. While the literature review highlighted commonly-utilised approaches specific to ID projects (such as PCM, RBM, and PMD Pro), data collection for this research revealed new additions to these approaches found in practice (such as CLA and CW) that have not been strongly documented in literature to date. On the other hand, it also surprisingly found that the PM4Dev approach documented in literature was not applied by the sample studied. This research contributes to research by creating a list of ID specific approaches, consequently adding new data upon which future research can develop thereby, identifying approaches that may better suit the needs of ID project managers. It is clear from the study that donors develop approaches and improve them in parallel while projects are running to ensure they ‘fit’ the project needs. The participants also articulated the powerful role that donors play in advocating and deciding which PM approaches are to be used by the ID project. However, further research is required to conclude their extent of influence. Further studies are needed to support or refute our findings regarding the non-use of PM4Dev in practice. Overall, we consider that improving ID project management should be a research priority as it can directly impact the lives of local communities and the overall sustainability of the projects may result in economic growth and increased standards of living. This research is an early exploration into ID PM approaches and in the future, it can be further developed via in-depth longitudinal case studies that research these said approaches further in practice.

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